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THE HERO OF PIGEON CAMP



BY MARTHA JAMES

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HE REACHED THE BOY AND GIRL IN THE WATER. — Page 227.

Pigeon Camp Series

THE HERO OF PIGEON CAMP

OR

HOW LUCCI MADE GOOD

BY

MARTHA JAMES

Author of "The Boys of Pigeon Camp," "My Friend Jim,"
"Tom Winstone, 'Wide Awake,'" "Jack
Tenfield's Star," "Jimmie Suter"

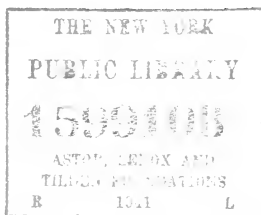
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BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

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THE HERO OF PIGEON CAMP

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THE HERO OF PIGEON CAMP

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST DAY

“HERE comes Jimmie Suter and he’s got that Italian with him. Do you suppose he’s going to our school?”

The question was asked by Shad Wilber, but the group of boys addressed were apparently so interested in watching the new boy as he approached the school yard that they did not answer.

Jimmie, with Lucci at his side, walked leisurely toward the boys and just before they were within ear-shot Shad said softly: “Watch me have some fun with the Dago.”

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“Go ahead!” urged the lads in a spirit of mischief.

“Hello, Jimmie,” said half a dozen voices at once.

Jimmie Suter greeted his schoolmates in true boyish fashion while Lucci, returning their glances with a friendly smile, looked shyly about.

Just at this point Jimmie was called by the teachers to help open a desk and Lucci for the moment was left alone with the boys, embarrassed as only a “new boy,” can be.

This was Shad’s chance and he took a step that brought him directly in front of the new boy.

“Hello, sonny, what’s yer name?” asked Shad in patronizing tones.

“My name is Augustine Paolucci—I am called Lucci for short.”

“But that is the name of a Dago,” said Shad, while the boys grinned.

“Well, what is your name?” asked Lucci quietly.

“My name! Well I like that!” cried Shad, turning to the other boys with a great show of indignation. “Say, fellers, he wants to know my name. Perhaps he thinks mine is something like his. Well, sonny,” turning to the strange boy, “my last name is Wilber—my first name is Shad.”

“But that is the name of a fish,” retorted Lucci in quiet tones.

A roar of laughter followed this retort and the boys were fairly delighted at Shad’s discomfiture.

“That’s one on you, Shad,” laughed Hank Allen. “A fish—let’s say a lobster, ha! ha! pretty good. He’s a lobster, isn’t he Lucci?”

Shad bit his lip and his face wore a half-hearted smile at the tables being turned on himself, but after a moment’s pause in the conversation he said quickly, “You’re quite

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right, Augustine Pao—I forget the rest, but I want to know right here how much is five and five? Come, now, how much is it?”

“Haven’t you learned addition yet?” asked Lucci innocently. “That is too bad. I will teach you if you want help.”

Shad glared at the new boy who regarded him coolly, while the onlookers laughed again.

“I don’t want any help from you,” sneered Shad, taking a step nearer, “or any impudence either—do you understand?” He raised his fist and was just going to shake it in Lucci’s face when he got a stinging blow that sent him reeling backward among his companions.

“Come on, if you want another,” cried the new boy with flashing eyes.

The group of boys, dumfounded at this turn of affairs, closed in quickly around Shad and Lucci and some of them began to urge Shad to fight.

“Not here, not here,” cried Charlie Baxter, “why not have it out after school?”

“That will suit me,” said Shad, boiling with rage.

“I do not want to fight with you,” began Lucci, his face crimson with shame and anger, but he was interrupted by a storm of protest from the other boys.

“Oh! I thought so!” flashed Shad. “You’re a pretty specimen for our school—a Dago and a coward!”

A dark flush spread over the new boy’s face. “I will meet you any time you please,” he said.

“Now look here,” said the cowardly Shad, “don’t be such a baby that you’ll tell Jimmie Suter.”

“No, don’t tell Jimmie,” urged Hank; “say nothing at all about it.”

“In the vacant lot on Cedar Road after school,” said Charlie Baxter in a business-

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like way—"here's Jimmie now and mum's the word."

Jimmie, little dreaming of all that had happened during his absence, reappeared in the midst of the boys just as the bell rang to fall into line.

"What's the matter Lucci, you're not homesick so soon are you?" asked Jimmie, giving his companion a hearty slap on the back. "Come, brace up—school isn't as bad as all that. You look as if we were a funeral."

"Perhaps it is for me," returned Lucci with a faint smile.

"Oh! come now, Lucci, cheer up!" persisted Jimmie, mistaking the meaning of his friend's doleful expression. "It will not be long, and when school is over you know we'll hurry out to the camp and have some sport."

"N-not to-day," said Lucci, hesitatingly. "I can't go right off, when school is out."

“Why not?”

“Oh! I have something I must do; don’t ask me now, Jimmie.”

“Oh, very well!” exclaimed Jimmie, puzzled that Lucci should have any secrets from him. “I’m going out there when my chores at home are done and you can come later, whenever you’re ready.”

That was the hardest day that Lucci ever knew. How the weary hours dragged on, and still when the last bell rang and school was dismissed, it seemed as if after all it had been all too short! Then the thought of what was before him, the encounter with Shad that had haunted him all that long day, made it the most unhappy he had known in a long time.

Lucci, quiet, sensitive, shy, did not want to fight Shad or anybody else. Every fibre of his little artist’s soul revolted at the thought and the very first day of school! It was too

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bad! But to be called a coward was more than Lucci could bear and so there was nothing else to be done. He must meet Shad, no matter how distasteful it might be, and he did not even have the comfort of knowing that Jimmie Suter would be present and on his side. He felt that with the sturdy and sensible Jimmie at hand such unfairness would be impossible.

It was indeed a melancholy lad who waved a hand to Jimmie as the latter disappeared behind some bushes and ran home as fast as he could go.

Lucci looked back and watched Jimmie until he was out of sight and then walked slowly toward the appointed place. He noticed several boys a short distance ahead and one of the number seeing Lucci, lagged behind the others and waited for him.

“Say,” said Charlie Baxter, when Lucci caught up, “don’t you be scared of Shad—he

just wants to bully you; but you stand right up and let him see that you aren't afraid."

"But I don't want to fight at all," said Lucci with warmth. "Why should he want to fight when—"

"Oh, I say! you can't get out of it now," interrupted the would-be counsellor, in a low voice, with a quick glance toward the other boys, and Charlie, who from the very first was of the opinion that the new boy had little chance, now regarded him with mingled feelings of pity and contempt.

"He called me a coward," said Lucci fiercely, "but he is the coward. I am a new boy at his school. Is it right or fair to force me into a fight the very first day? That is not the way I would treat a stranger. I bet Jimmie Suter would never—"

"Hush-sh, you must not tell Jimmie anything about this," began Charlie, "and now here we are."

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The crowd of boys separated as Charlie and Lucci walked into their midst, and Shad Wilber, a sneer on his face, came forward.

"I've got some string in my pocket," said Charlie, "and I think I'll stake off a ring right here and now."

Murmurs of approval greeted this remark and while Charlie with the aid of several of the boys proceeded to "rope off" the space, Shad strutted around among the boys with a backward grin at poor Lucci who stood apart and eyed the scene with conflicting emotions.

"Now," declared Charlie, when everything was ready, "this ought to be fought by rounds in a systematic way, and I propose to act as referee. Are you ready, Shad?"

"All prime," was the quick reply.

"Are you ready, Lucci?"

But the new boy, flashing an angry look at the glib spokesman, did not answer.

"Oh! I say, he's scared to death," said

Shad. "We ought to call the thing off out of pity if nothing else—why he's trembling—he's—"

"You lie!" roared Lucci, making a rush for his tormentor. "Come on! fight if you will, I'm ready!"

He had followed his last word with a blow that almost knocked Shad off his feet, and while the frightened Shad was getting his wits together Lucci gave him another and still another.

The boys cried out in their astonishment. Charlie Baxter and his rules were forgotten in the excitement as Shad, half blind with rage, floundered about in a bewildered sort of way; but in a minute it was evident to all that he was completely at the mercy of the boy before him.

The quiet, dark-eyed boy seemed transformed into a veritable fury. Every blow

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had its effect till at last, Shad, prone on his back, begged for mercy.

“Am I a coward—am I—am I?” shouted Lucci, glaring down on his tormentor.

“No—no—I take it all back,” said Shad, trying hard to keep back tears of rage and mortification.

Lucci stepped back, while the boys turned as one from the contemptible Shad and hovered around him, but he flashed an angry look upon one and all of them.

“Good boy, Lucci! let me congratulate you!” began Charlie Baxter extending his hand, but Lucci ignoring the proffered hand turned away. “No, I don’t want your congratulation,” he cried hotly. “I want nothing to do with you. When a stranger comes among you, you get up a quarrel between you to bring him shame. You have no honor. You are not fit for the boys of Pigeon Camp

to know," and so saying Lucci, with scorn in his eyes, walked away leaving behind him the most astonished group of boys in the county.

"Phew!" whistled Hank Allen after Lucci's retreating figure. "If that doesn't beat all."

"He can fight all right and he's no coward," said another. "You ran up against the wrong chap that time, eh, Shad?"

But the wretched Shad muttering threats under his breath, sneaked away.

"Look here, boys," blurted out Charlie Baxter, who up to this point had been strangely quiet, "Lucci is right. It was a pretty mean way to treat a stranger at the school and I for one feel ashamed of myself for the part I took in it, and I mean to tell Lucci so the very first time I see him."

"So shall I;" "And I;" "And I," rang out a chorus of voices.

"Well," said Charlie, seeing that we are

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all of the same opinion I propose to act as spokesman for all you fellows. I'll go to Lucci and I'll explain that we didn't realize what a shabby way it was to treat a new boy, and we apologize. What do you say? Shall I do it?"

"Yes"—"yes"—"Yes—" came the chorus.

"Contrary-minded? It is a vote," said Charlie.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DAY, *continued*

OUR friend Lucci, smarting under the strain of his recent experience, hurried on his way to the camp, firmly resolving never to have anything to do with the boys of that hated school; for the lad as he went over in his mind the events of that first day felt that he really did hate it.

He did not feel the least pride in the fact that Shad Wilber had received a good thrashing at his hands, on the contrary, Lucci felt ashamed and humiliated.

His bitter thoughts continued until he was almost home, when the sudden sharp calling of two blue-jays overhead held Lucci's attention. He watched them as they alighted

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on a maple branch over his head and appeared to scold each other roundly. Then he glanced upward to a sky that was covered with fleecy white clouds, slowly shaping themselves into great domes and towers. If he only had his book and pencil he would have sketched it then and there.

This thought sent a flood of happier ones to his mind. He began to run in his eagerness to reach the Camp. Shad Wilber and the unpleasant affair of that afternoon were almost forgotten and at last, when Pigeon Camp was really in sight, Lucci gave a shout of joy when he saw Jimmie Suter emerge from the cottage with a long stick across his shoulder.

“Just in time!” cried Jimmie. “I was thinking you ought to be around; come with me if you want to see some fun.”

“What is it?” asked Lucci, following on

the heels of Jimmie, who made straight for the woods.

“I don’t know exactly what it is,” replied our hero, “but I’m going to find out just as soon as ever I can.”

So saying, he darted along the path that led deep into the woods, and after a short walk approached a ledge that jutted out on one side and formed a steep precipice.

“It was here,” said Jimmie, standing on the ledge and pointing below to where a rock rested on a small grassy mound. “I was standing here not five minutes ago when I saw a strange head disappear under that rock. I couldn’t make out whether it was a fox or a wild cat, but I’m going to get it out, whatever it is.

“I think perhaps if we were dead still,” he went on, “it might come out again.”

So saying he threw himself flat on his

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stomach, followed by Lucci, and the pair peered anxiously at the hole wherein Jimmie had seen the queer head, but the animal refused to make its appearance and after waiting a reasonable length of time Jimmie and Lucci arose, crept down the embankment and stood directly in front of the hole.

Then Jimmie poked his stick around as far as he could, but not a sound was heard.

Lucci had provided himself with a stout branch and he, too, tried prodding the deepest recesses of that hole, but all to no purpose.

“It must be a woodchuck,” said Jimmie; “if I had water I’d flood him out.”

“Why! I don’t believe there’s a thing in that hole alive,” replied Lucci.

“He never could stand all this bother.” So saying, he made one fierce thrust when suddenly, with a bound, Mr. Woodchuck was out of the hole before their very eyes.



WITH A BOUND, MR. WOODCHUCK WAS OUT OF THE HOLE.

“Catch him! Catch him! you’ve got him!” shouted Lucci, as Jimmie darted after the woodchuck. But the wild things of the woods can outrun the swiftest lad in Christendom. It was a short, swift race with the woodchuck over the rocks, and he was lost in a thicket of underbrush almost before they knew it.

“He got away,” panted Jimmie, “but wouldn’t I just like to catch one!”

“What would you do with it, Jimmie?”

“Well, if it was a young one I’d try to tame it.”

“Tame a woodchuck?”

“Yes, I think it would be lots of fun.”

They had started to walk leisurely back to the Camp and were within sight of the lake when Lucci stooped suddenly and picked up something small and bright that glistened on the ground at his feet.

“A gold pin!” exclaimed Jimmie, “and it

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looks as if it had been here quite a while.”

He brushed the mud away and passed the pin to Jimmie, who examined it closely.

“A monogram, ‘M. H. D.’ Now I wonder what those letters stand for,” mused Jimmie. “Well, the owner may turn up. In the meantime we might advertise it in the post-office.”

Then Lucci put the pin in his pocket and the boys went down to the float and aboard the *Marjorie* and drifted out into the middle of the lake.

They sat there for nearly an hour fishing, and then went ashore and did numerous chores about the Camp until it was time for our hero to start for home.

Jimmie had asked permission of his parents to stay all night on that first school day, but his father had promptly refused, as the boy had feared that he might do.

“You’ve been at Pigeon Camp all summer,

Jimmie, and had lots of play. Now it's time for work. You'll have your chores at home to do and school lessons to prepare and you cannot live at the Camp."

He had, however, given Jimmie full permission to go every Friday night after school and remain until Sunday morning, when he and Lucci were to report for Sunday School and spend the rest of the day at Jimmie's home.

Jimmie was also allowed to go to the Camp every day after school when there was no work for him at home, but he was to be in the house promptly at supper time.

Jimmie was of course disappointed because he could not live at the Camp all the time, as he had done during the summer, but he felt that his father was right.

If all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, I am afraid that all play and no work would make him a very useless one. Vaca-

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tion was the time for play, but school time meant other things and so Jimmie, as he swept his eye over the camp, accepted the arrangement philosophically.

When he was about to start for home he said with a smile:

“I guess you’ll be lonesome to-night, Lucci.”

“Yes, I think it likely—it will seem queer to be all alone up here, but I suppose I’ll get used to it.”

“Never mind, Lucci. Just wait until Friday night. We’ll all be up here to stay over Saturday and then you’ll see some sport.”

“Do you really think Philip and Rand can come, Jimmie?”

“Sure of it—they’re probably counting the days; now I must make tracks for home. Good-bye Lucci, and take care of yourself. I’ll see you at school in the morning.”

So saying Jimmie vanished down the woodland path, whistling as he went, and so ended the first day of school.

CHAPTER III

A FUNNY FRIDAY NIGHT

THE next morning when Lucci was on his way to school he met Jimmie, wearing a broad smile as he waved a letter over his head.

“It’s from Rand—I just got it,” said Jimmie by way of explanation. “He only sent a line just to tell us that he was coming out here Friday after school and was going to stay until Saturday evening. That means fun with a big ‘F.’ ”

“I’m glad of that,” cried Lucci; “what shall we do? Can’t we think up something fine to surprise Rand and Philip?”

“Oh, we’ll find plenty of fun at the Camp, never fear, and I just happened to think of

the lecture. There's a free lecture on China with stereopticon views to be given in the church. We mustn't miss that. Everybody is going and they all say it will be fine."

"Oh, good! I'd like to go to that," said Lucci, and just at this point the two friends entered the schoolyard and joined the group of playful boys already assembled.

Shortly before the bell rang, Charlie Baxter called Lucci aside and in a few words told the little artist something that made him feel very happy indeed, and showed him that the right spirit did prevail among the boys and that they were, one and all, his friends, and were very sorry for the unpleasant occurrences of that first day of school.

Lucci's handsome face flushed with pleasure as Charlie apologized, and he entered into his school work that day with new zeal.

The next few days passed without anything unusual happening, but Friday after-

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noon brought the looked-for visit from Philip and Rand.

When the four boys met at the camp they danced a war dance around the tent from sheer joy at the thought of their reunion. Then they made a rush for the house-boat, got aboard, and were soon paddling out into the middle of the lake where they exchanged stories, telling each other about the first few days at school.

Lucci, who was still sensitive over his encounter with Shad Wilber, said nothing, and the other boys thinking his silence meant that he had been homesick, began to tease him and made many jokes about their little comrade. In this way they drifted about until it was time to go ashore, when Rand made them all smile by declaring he was so very hungry that he felt he could eat an elephant.

“What are you going to have for supper, Lucci?” he shouted, as he watched the little caretaker of the Camp jump off the houseboat and hurry toward the cottage.

“Oh, I don’t know,” was the answer. “Bread and butter and some pear sauce that Jimmie brought. I think that’s all.”

“That all!” exclaimed Philip with a long face. “It’s very evident that I am not running the commissary department of this camp. If I were we’d have something beside bread and butter and nothing.”

“Sorry you don’t like my bill of fare,” laughed Lucci. “It’s good bread, fine butter, nice sweet pears, and milk; all you want of that.”

“That isn’t enough,” said Rand, “but wait—I have an idea! We’ll have an oyster stew. This is September, and oysters are good, you know, in every month that has an

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'R' in it. What do you say if we jump on the tandem and get some oysters at Baxter's store?"

"The very thing!" cried Philip with a shout, while Jimmie whistled with satisfaction.

"Now you and Jimmie go along as quickly as ever you can go," Philip went on, "and Lucci and I will mind the house and have everything ready."

"Has Rand got the money to pay for them?" asked Lucci in a whisper, while the two lads mounted the tandem and disappeared in a cloud of dust down the road.

"I think so," said Philip with a grin, and then seeing the look of wonder on Lucci's face he added, "You know Rand is considered a pretty rich boy; at any rate, I know his father gives him lots of pocket money to spend."

Then the two boys went to work and in a short time had everything ready. „

A wood fire was soon crackling merrily with a pot swung over it gypsy-fashion, and when the two lads returned on the tandem with the precious oysters, a shout of joy went up as Lucci and Philip started to prepare the stew.

“We did not forget the oyster crackers, either,” said Jimmie; “it takes us to do the shopping, even if you fellows do know how to cook.”

At last the stew was ready and oh, how delightful it was! How good everything tasted to the four hungry campers as they sat down to the jolliest kind of a spread!

One vied with the other as to who would get the most oysters and eat the greatest number of oyster crackers. How they teased Jimmie about his capacity for absorbing the

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succulent bivalve, and laughed uproariously when they discovered that Lucci had never before tasted an oyster and was a little doubtful about beginning.

But when it was all over and the dishes cleared away, the boys stretched themselves near the tent and agreed that it was the best supper they had ever had.

They talked over plans until it began to grow a little dark, when Jimmie reminded them of the stereopticon views on China.

“Why, sure enough!” cried Philip, “it’s this very night and some of the folks at Northwood are coming over to go. We must start early and get good seats.”

“We could all go on the tandem,” said Rand. “That will bring us there in good time.”

It was decided then and there that Jimmie, with Lucci behind, would ride the tandem,

while Rand stood on the front and Philip in the rear.

They were still talking over the arrangements when a sudden commotion among the pigeons in the barn made the boys jump to their feet.

“A cat, I’ll bet!” cried Jimmie. “He’s after those young ones!” and so saying he made a rush for the barn followed by the other boys.

But they had hardly entered when Jimmie turned back like a flash.

“Run! run!” cried Jimmie, while three excited boys turned as one, almost tumbling over each other in their efforts to reach the tent again.

“I saw it—it was a black and white cat!” cried Lucci, and then he began to look from one to the other, a puzzled expression on his face.

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“You’re a nice one,” said Philip, turning to Jimmie, when he could find his voice. “I thought you said it was a cat? Get away Jimmie!”

“Get away yourself!” retorted Jimmie, while Rand stood apart and shook with laughter.

“It might have been worse,” said Rand.

“I don’t think much harm has been done. Jimmie’s the worst.”

“Nothing of the sort,” growled Jimmie, whereupon Philip and Rand set up such peals of laughter that Jimmie had to smile in spite of himself.

Lucci could not see the joke and was so bewildered that the boys laughed louder than ever.

“What was it? Why are you laughing?” asked the puzzled boy, who had just had his first experience with one phase of country life.

“It was a pole-cat,” replied Jimmie, “and you’re lucky and we’re lucky.”

“Not too lucky!” cried Rand, laughing harder than ever. “I don’t believe we can go to the stereopticon views to-night in these clothes.”

“Oh, but we must!” said Philip. “I haven’t any other clothes here and I want to go. I wouldn’t miss it for anything.”

“Of course we’ll go,” cried Jimmie. “It isn’t as bad as all that. There’s only a faint odor and if we could only get some good perfume and put it over our clothes we’d be all right.”

“I have it!” cried Rand. “Musk is the thing—that has a good strong odor and I’ll jump on the tandem and ride like mad to the village and buy a whole lot.”

Suiting the action to the word Rand and Philip disappeared to procure the musk, while Jimmie and Lucci began to arrange

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their toilet and make themselves presentable for the forthcoming evening's entertainment. Lucci naturally had a great many questions to ask about the mysterious little animal that had been able to make its presence known in so powerful a manner, and Jimmie explained as well as constant desire to laugh would allow him to.

CHAPTER IV

FOUR ON A TANDEM

“THIS musk is the very thing!” cried Jimmie a little later, when the boys stood in line while Rand sprinkled each one of them generously with the contents of his package.

“Yes,” said Philip with evident satisfaction. “I think we’re better,” but Lucci shivered and declared that it was worse.

“Pour the whole thing over Jimmie because he’s the strongest,” said Philip, with a burst of laughter.

“I’m not either—it’s Lucci.”

“Now look here, boys,” said Rand when he could control his voice, “I don’t believe they’ll ever let us into that lecture. When

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we can get the odor here in the open air just think what it would be indoors.”

“Oh; I say Rand, you’re making a fuss about nothing. We’re all right—it’s just because we know what we know that you think we aren’t,” and this reply, though not very lucid, seemed to convey to the boys a certain note of courage.

“I’m bound I’ll go,” said Philip, “and I’ve just thought of a plan—a bully one. In union there is strength, you know, so we’ll separate just for to-night. I propose that we all go on the tandem as agreed, but when we get near the church we’ll dismount and we won’t all go in at the same time, and perhaps we better not sit too near together.”

This plan was adopted, the boys declaring that it was a fine scheme.

After a little “fixing up” the tandem was brought forth. Philip swung himself lightly on the front seat, Lucci on the rear. Jimmie

Suter stood on the coasting steps while Rand stepped quickly on the back. Then the four started off for the quiet little church of Sunnyside where a young man named Mr. Reeves, lately returned from a mission in China, was to deliver a lecture with many fine views.

“Now,” said Jimmie, “let’s go like the wind. I know there’s going to be a crowd and we don’t want to be late.”

The tandem flew over the road and no word was spoken till the lights of the town were seen flickering ahead.

“One more good spurt,” said Rand, “and we’ll be there.”

A few minutes later Jimmie gave the word to stop and all hands jumped off.

The boys found themselves in a vacant lot a few blocks away from the church, where they could see groups of people hurrying along.

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“Now you go ahead, Rand,” ordered Jimmie, “you and Lucci. After a little while Philip can saunter in and I’ll go last. We’ll leave the tandem right here behind these bushes till the show is over.”

This plan was agreed upon as indeed anything that Jimmie Suter suggested always was, and Rand hurried along and was soon inside the edifice.

Philip and Lucci followed and when they were safely inside Jimmie gave a final brush to his coat sleeve, smoothed down the rebellious tuft of hair, and he, too, went along, trying hard as he neared the church to look unconcerned; but his heart beat faster as he stepped inside the vestibule, when a group of young women just ahead turned suddenly and looked at him.

There was a certain unmistakable expression on their faces that made Jimmie blush to the roots of his hair.

How he wished he had not ventured to come! He told himself that he had no business to risk it but he was already inside and the speaker was just beginning his lecture.

There were but very few vacant seats but Jimmie found one in the rear and dropped into it, and for a moment did not dare to take his eyes from the man's face.

At last he glanced about to see if he could locate the other boys when all at once his nearest neighbor, who happened to be Charlie Baxter's uncle, touched him lightly on the arm.

"Great Mesopotamia! Jimmie, where'd ye meet that pole-cat?" he whispered. Jimmie's face was scarlet as he gazed straight ahead and did not answer, but when an old lady near him took out a handkerchief and glared, our hero felt that he wanted the ground to open and swallow him.

"It's gettin' wuss," whispered Charlie's

uncle; "don't yer see folks lookin'?" For the sake o' the heathen Chinees that they want to hear about don't stay, Jimmie." But Jimmie's knees would have refused to support him if he had even made the attempt to stand, and just then his attention was attracted by a scene across the aisle, where Lucci and Philip, sitting together, were the target of many angry glances.

Peter Davis, an elderly bachelor who was known to be testy, leaned over and shook his fist in Lucci's face.

"You young rascals—you'll pay for this," hissed Peter between his teeth.

Lucci's lips trembled but Philip turned neither to the right or the left, and was apparently unconscious of Peter's presence.

Rand Cotler, however, who sat just behind and had taken it all in, began to shake with suppressed mirth, when suddenly a hand was placed on his shoulder and turning he beheld

a very indignant and choleric-looking old gentleman.

“Young rascals, I’ll fix you,” he hissed, looking as if ready to burst with wrath.

At this point in the lecture everybody was looking at everybody else, and indignation seemed to ooze from every pore.

Suddenly a stout woman sitting in the very first pew, arose and walked majestically down the aisle and out of the church.

Glances were exchanged between all the ladies present, and the next moment a nervous-looking little woman arose, and wrapping a shawl closer about her hastily departed.

Then they went in groups of two and three until the audience had greatly diminished, and many were the vacant seats in place of the well filled pews that had greeted the lecturer.

Jimmie’s heart sank at this turn of affairs,

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but he remained in his seat and heard Rand titter right out loud.

Jimmie could not laugh. He was too frightened and sorry, but when Ebenezer Allen, a particularly aggressive person, had a fit of sneezing and then with tightened lips almost ran out, Jimmie began to see the funny side of the matter, too.

Then a few more passed out, and for the first time a look of annoyance came into the speaker's face.

The boys noticed the look of displeasure although it was only momentary, and Jimmie wished more than ever that they had not come.

At last the evening's entertainment came to an end and the speaker immediately walked down the aisle to where Jimmie was sitting, and where he was at once joined by Philip and Lucci and Rand. He was a tall

young man, slightly stooped, with a fine, expressive face. A smile broke over his features as his eyes rested on the boys.

“Well, boys, you came pretty near winning out.”

“If you please, sir,” said Jimmie, “we wish to apologize. We didn’t mean to cause any trouble and I am very sorry that we came.”

The other boys hastened to express their disappointment and then Rand, in a few words, told the whole story.

“Well, boys,” said the speaker of the evening, when he had laughed merrily over Rand’s story, “I was booked to give this lecture here to-night and it would take more than the suggestion of a pole-cat to make me quit.”

He had made a most enjoyable evening for the boys. The pictures were fine and he had

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a way of interspersing his remarks with bright stories that were thoroughly appreciated by his audience.

Many of them on their way out stopped to tell him so, and the boys one and all thanked him and told him how much they had enjoyed it.

“Well, I’m glad the audience, although small, was so appreciative, and I just wanted to say before you go that I’m coming out to that camp you told me about. I’d like to see it.”

“We would like to have you,” said Rand, spokesman for the party; “we’re there every Saturday.”

“Perhaps I’ll take a trip out to see you to-morrow,” said the man, beginning to gather together his materials.

Shortly after the boys said good-night and left the church.

In a short time they had mounted the tandem and flew like the wind for the camp.

CHAPTER V

PLANNING A HOUSE

TRUE to his word, the following day Mr. Reeves appeared at Pigeon Camp and was taken all over it by the boys.

He was delighted to see the hens and pigeons and very much pleased at the house-boat. It was while they were all drifting around in the *Marjorie* that the man turned to Jimmie saying—

“You are quite a builder, my boy.”

“I’ve tried my hand at a few simple things,” replied Jimmie modestly, “because you see, I like to do it. I’d rather build than do anything else in the world.”

“And everyone can do his best thing easiest,” quoted the man, with a smile.

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“Jimmie’s cut out for a great builder,” declared Philip; “he’s going to make something big some day.”

“That’s good,” said their new friend. “I’m glad, Jimmie, that you are interested in this subject. All buildings, you know, are the visible expression of somebody’s thoughts and desires. All have existed in some mind previous to the actual work of construction. First, there is the thought, next, the desire, then the will to do it, and the thing is done.”

“I hope to study architecture some day,” said Jimmie.

“The architect is the link between the will to do and the actual construction for most of the modern buildings,” went on Mr. Reeves.

“The architect transfers the thoughts and desires of the prospective builder to paper in the form of working drawings, and right here is something to think about, boys. A

working drawing, whether of building, boat, or machine, can be read and understood by the people of all lands, no matter what the spoken language."

For a moment Jimmie pondered over these words, then he flashed a bright glance at the man. "Why! I never thought of that before!"

"Now," said Mr. Reeves, "I'm interested in architecture and building and I'll tell you why. In the first place, it is my business, or was before my trip to China, and in the second place, I'm going to build a house right here in Sunnyview."

"Build a house here!" repeated the boys.

"Those are my plans, boys. I was born about twelve miles north of this place and I'm going to settle down here with my family for the rest of my life. You didn't know I had a family," he went on with a smile. "Well, I have. My two boys, about Lucci's

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age, are at school, while their mother and baby sister are on a visit at my wife's home in England, and I mean to have the new house ready by the time they come back."

"It's a big undertaking," said Jimmie. "Perhaps we can help you."

"Thank you, Jimmie, I own a twenty-five-foot lot and I have drawn up a set of plans for a house that I think is the very best house that can be built on that area."

"Where is the lot?" asked Jimmie.

"It's on North Road, just beyond that old vacant mansion that has all the shrubbery around it."

"The haunted house!" exclaimed Rand and Jimmie almost in the same breath. Mr. Reeves smiled. "Is it supposed to be haunted? I never heard that before."

"Oh, yes!" said Jimmie. "That old house in North Road has always had the name of being a haunted house. I never saw any

ghost there, but I've heard ever so many stories about it."

"So have I," declared Rand. "We had a hired man once, who told me that strange noises could be heard at night and sometimes lights were seen in different rooms."

"Why, this is interesting," said the man. "I had no idea that Sunnyview boasted of a real haunted house. Well, come over there some day next week and I'll show you my lot and tell you about my wonderful plans—they are wonderful, you know," he went on with a smile, "when you remember that my lot is only twenty-five feet front."

"I'd like to see it now!" cried Jimmie, always interested in anything pertaining to building.

"We'll go ashore then," said Mr. Reeves, "and have a look at it."

In a short time the *Marjorie* was moored to the bank and all hands went ashore and fol-

lowed their new friend to North Road to look at his lot.

“You know the old adage,” said the man, when sometime later they reached the place and stood looking over the long, narrow interior lot, 25x38 feet, facing the north. “‘Start right, then go ahead’.”

“To start right in the building of a home,” he went on, “is a very important matter, and remember that it costs as much to build a badly proportioned and poorly arranged house as it does a good one of equal area. Once in a while the amateur designer will strike a satisfactory design. The skilled designer will have different degrees of success with his buildings, but he will never have a bad design.”

“Then I should think,” observed Jimmie, “that in order to start right one ought to go to a good designer, even for the smallest of home buildings.”

“Right you are, Jimmie—go to a good one. State your minimum requirements and the maximum outlay you can afford.”

“What kind of a house are you going to build?” asked Lucci.

Mr. Reeves smiled. “It’s all in here,” he said, tapping his forehead. “On the first floor, a large living room with vestibuled entrance, a central hall connected with a side-entrance, a dining-room and a kitchen at the rear, both opening into a large enclosed rear veranda. In the second story I have four chambers, each with a large closet, a bath-room and a linen closet. The two front chambers are to open out to a small balcony, and the two rear ones are to connect through large French windows to a large covered sleeping-balcony. For the attic I have in mind three chambers and a bathroom—the front chamber to be large, with an alcove at each side for separate beds. The cellar will

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have a furnace room, a vegetable room, a laundry, and a light, airy work-shop for my boys, with doors opening out to the rear large enough to remove a boat seven feet wide."

"Phew!" whistled Jimmie. "Can all that be done in this small lot?"

"It can, Jimmie. I will prove it to you by my plans."

"When are you going to begin?" asked Lucci, who had followed the man with much interest.

"This afternoon, and as I want to build it at the least possible cost I am going to do most of the work myself."

Jimmie's eyes beamed. Here was a chance actually to build something worth while, and he said quickly—

"We'll all help you, Mr. Reeves. Four strong boys ought to be able to do something. We all want to learn just as much

as we can about building houses, and we know that you can tell ever so much."

The others promptly expressed their approval of what Jimmie had said, and Mr. Reeves thanked them in a way that showed his appreciation of their liking for him, as well as of the services they offered.

Then the boys went back to camp for dinner, looking forward to some interesting experiences in the building line.

CHAPTER VI

A BUSY SATURDAY AFTERNOON

IN the afternoon our boys repaired to the lot on North Road on which Mr. Reeves was going to build. They found him there just getting ready to set the profiles, or batter-boards, as they are sometimes called.

They consisted of three stakes and two boards at each corner of the building, the stakes being set to form a right-angle about three feet outside of the line of building, and to these stakes were nailed the two boards, their tops level at the exact height of the top of masonry wall or the under side of the sill of the building.

“You shall have some practical lessons,

boys, in the art of building construction before we get through," said Mr. Reeves.

After all the stakes and boards were in place, Jimmie helped Mr. Reeves draw four lines of strong twine taut over the top of the boards, first placing one side-line in its correct position to represent where the finished wall would be. They next placed the other side-line the width of the building away and parallel with the first. Then they placed the two end-lines the length of the building apart and at right angles to the side-lines.

"The easiest and a very accurate way of squaring the lines," said Mr. Reeves, "is to stretch a steel tape line diagonally from corner to corner and note the diagonal distance, then reverse the tape to the opposite corners, and if the distance is the same, then the lines are at perfect right-angles, or in other words, the building will be square."

"My father sometimes makes a large

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square,” said Jimmie, “by combining the three dimensions, 6, 8, and 10 feet, into a right-angle triangle, the longest dimension being the hypotenuse of the triangle. With this improvised square I’ve seen him adjust the lines.”

When the lines were in the correct position, permanent nails were driven into the top of the profile boards.

“While mechanics frequently use the large square Jimmie referred to,” said Mr. Reeves, “and have perfect confidence in the accuracy of the method, many of them cannot prove by figures that the dimensions given form a right-angle, but I will show you, boys, that it is only a question in square root, and that square root is really nothing very formidable if you illustrate the problem in a practical manner.

“In this case square the two smallest numbers and add the sums together, thus:

$$6 \times 6 = 36$$

$$8 \times 8 = 64$$

Total 100

“To extract the square root of 100 find what number multiplied by itself will equal 100. Think of it for a moment and you will see that $10 \times 10 = 100$, so our three-sided figure is a right-angle triangle; the 6 and 8-foot sides representing the right angle, and the 10-foot line forming the diagonal side.”

The work was now finished as far as it went and the boys had learned something useful. Mr. Reeves declared that it was a very good afternoon's work and the next step would be excavating for the cellar.

“I want to help with that, too,” said Jimmie.

“Well, I shall work here all the time,” said the builder with a smile.

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The boys then started back for the Camp and Jimmie Suter did not have an opportunity to visit the site for the house until the following Monday after school.

He and Lucci found Mr. Reeves studying the plans of his house, which he explained in detail to the two boys.

He had removed the sod and stacked it in a pile on one side of the front of the lot, and also the top soil for a depth of about a foot. This also had been placed on one side of the front of the lot.

The reason for this, he explained to the boys, was that the rich soil and the turf would be used as the top layer when the final grading of the lot was being done.

In a short time Tilly Johnson and his tip-cart appeared and the boys helped in loading the cart after he had excavated about eight feet below the top of the profiles. This earth was deposited on the rear of the

lot, which was about the proper grade in front but sloped back at the rear and would therefore have to be built up to the desired grade.

The following Saturday our boys helped Mr. Reeves again. They rode with Johnson in his tip-cart to a pasture owned by Rand's father, who, pleased at the practical lessons his boy was getting, gave him permission to take all the stones wanted for the foundation from the pasture wall.

They selected only those stones having flat surfaces and at least one good face. When these were delivered to the builder they were distributed on all sides of the excavation.

Once more the boys started off with Johnson and visited Farmer Jennings, who sold Mr. Reeves sand for ten cents a load.

"Now," said the builder when the sand and stones were on hand, "I shall be forced to pay the local dealer's price for the cement

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and lime used in the construction, as they are materials not supplied by our kind Mother Earth except in a raw state not suitable for our use.”

The boys learned that the foundation of a building is a very important part of the structure, and in order to have the wall water-tight Mr. Reeves used Portland cement mortar for all work below the ground level, reserving the lime for the brick work above grade and for the chimneys.

Of course the laying of stone walls and the moving of mortar was too hard and laborious a task for the boys, but they helped the two masons and a tender that Mr. Reeves hired the following week, and saw the large stones set in place.

The water main in the street having been tapped, the mortar bin made, and all materials to work with being on hand, our boys surveyed the results of the work thus far

with satisfaction and parted late one Saturday afternoon tired, but looking ahead with interest to the actual work of construction to be begun Monday morning.

On Sunday afternoon when Jimmie and Lucci were taking a short walk in the woods, they came upon their friend, Mr. Reeves, sitting in a secluded spot reading, but he put his book aside when the boys appeared and the three had a delightful talk until supper time.

Of course the conversation turned to building and as usual the man had a fund of useful knowledge.

Mr. Reeves believed in getting boys interested in a mechanical trade and then leading them to a state of mind that would desire the technical knowledge and theory that lies behind all trades.

Man has been ten thousand years learning how to bridge a river one thousand feet wide,

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but a bright boy can now learn to do it in about five years' study.

Not more than one boy in five has a decided bent for a certain thing. Most of them when school is over, drift into the first place that offers a few dollars in earnings; then, after a while, it is just a struggle for bread.

A few years ago there was an accident in one of the Pittsburg steel mills that killed two men—both steel-workers. One man was getting in wages two dollars a day, and the other fifty thousand a year. One could lift a piece of steel, and the other could make it at less cost than any other man in the world.

This is a true statement, and it illustrates the difference in the earning power of the man who labors with his hands only, and the one who uses hands, head, and heart.

CHAPTER VII

BUILDING

MONDAY morning before school, Jimmie and Lucci hastened to the lot on North Road and watched Andy, the mason's tender, as the first batch of mortar was being mixed.

As Mr. Reeves wished to have mortar of medium richness he had given directions to have it mixed in the proportion of three parts of clean sharp sand to one part of cement, and as Andy was an experienced tender that was the only instruction he required.

Cement mortar sets quickly, so Andy decided to mix his mortar in batches of a barrel of sand to one-third of a barrel of cement.

First of all, he filled his water barrels from

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the hydrant, then he took an old cement barrel and knocked out the bottom, so that it had neither head nor bottom. This was set in the mortar bin and filled with dry sand. Then he removed the barrel and spread out the sand in an uniform layer, next he spread one-third of a barrel of cement over the sand, then took his mortar-hoe and mixed the cement and sand together thoroughly, after which water was applied and the whole mass worked over several times until it was about the consistency of a good fat mud pie.

The "mud pie" comparison is not very scientific, we admit, but what it lacks in dignity is more than made up in its accuracy, for there could hardly be a better standard for a tender to use in tempering his mortar for the masons.

Mr. Reeves then explained to the boys that cement mortar when exposed to the air, begins to harden very quickly after being

mixed, so that all of a batch should be used within an hour or two from the time of mixing.

The hardening, or set, as it is called by the masons, is a chemical action that takes place in the cement after the water is applied; the sand being a negative factor in the chemical transformation and used chiefly to supply body to the mixture.

Cement mortar does not obtain its final degree of hardness until after the expiration of several months, and some authorities say several years.

Cement-and-sand mixture is called mortar, but with the addition of broken stones or gravel in a considerable proportion, the mixture is then called concrete; the stone or gravel being added to give additional body.

“And right here, boys,” said Mr. Reeves, “is something to think about—the human race has had the stone age and we are now

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having, I suppose, the steel and coal age, but the coal of the world, so scientists tell us, can be exhausted in a few hundred years and the iron ore in a few thousand, but the materials from which concrete is made are inexhaustible; therefore there must be at no distant date as time goes on, a concrete age."

"I should like to learn all about it," said Jimmie, "if it's going to be so important in future building."

"Now you've said it, Jimmie!" exclaimed the man, warming up to his favorite subject. "The mixing of mortar and of concrete is a humble occupation, but the boys who learn all the inner secrets of this humble material, its set expansion and contraction resistance, tensile strength and action in air and under water, and in connection with steel reinforcement, will be the men who in the future will

design the great engineering works of the world."

"If the coal is going to be exhausted," observed Lucci, "how are the people going to keep warm?"

"There's the question," laughed Mr. Reeves. "Twenty-five dollars a ton, we can safely assume, will be a very moderate price for coal one hundred years hence," he added.

"Unless," said Jimmie, "they discover a cheaper and better way to get heat and can do without the coal altogether."

"Well, boys, start your minds at work in the right direction. The boy whose mind outstrips his hands at a task, and who thinks and plans out for himself, is the one who will see into the future and the future needs of the people, and he must go to college some day to get a technical education in the subjects of most vital importance to the present

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age—chemistry, mechanics, and electricity.”

“That’s what I’m going to work for,” said Jimmie, “a good technical education.”

“That’s the right course, Jimmie. The day is fast passing when the average man can control the natural resources of the earth other than as a tiller of the soil, therefore the great majority of the people must live from an occupation or business that is builded upon a foundation of chemistry or mechanics, and the boy that looks from his trowel or his hammer to a technical education, then later looks at an undeveloped stream and develops a water-power plant that will save twenty tons of coal a day, is a public benefactor.”

“Now,” said Lucci, “we’ve got to run; it’s time for school.”

CHAPTER VIII

BUILDING, *continued*

WHEN school was over the boys hurried to the house and found the work going along swiftly.

The stone foundation wall was laid up to grade, and they watched and helped in the wall from grade to the sill line, which was brick laid in lime mortar tempered with Portland cement. Brick courses were laid to a line and all the corners made square and plumb.

The chimneys were started on a good footing in the cellar bottom, and were built up with common brick laid in lime mortar, and the chimney having a fireplace had an ash pit in the basement.

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For the next two weeks our boys had some practical lessons in carpenter work. They learned that the framing lumber consisted of sills, joists, studding, and sheathing.

The first thing Mr. Reeves did was to frame the sills and girders, and being a light dwelling-house he did not frame it with the old style mortise and tenon system, but halved the sills together at corners and angles and cut the studding with square ends, relying on thorough nailing to hold the various parts together.

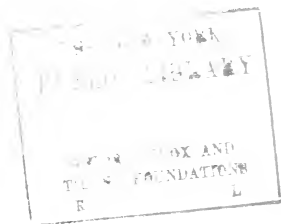
The sills were placed on the walls and the girders run across the cellar from wall to wall.

When this was done he started to frame the floor joist, which consisted of sawing to the required length and sizing the ends to set on the sills and girders.

He doubled the joist around the stair and chimney openings to give additional strength.



THE BOYS DID THE NEXT OPERATION — LAYING THE ROUGH FLOOR. — *Page 79.*



After the joist was set in place and nailed he cut in the bridging, or x-bracing, in the centre of each space to stiffen the joist.

The boys did the next operation, which was laying the rough floor of a cheap quality of matched and dressed boards.

The next thing to do was to level up the sills. Mr. Reeves used wedges to raise the sill from the masonry until the floor was level all around. Later the space between sill and brick wall was filled with mortar, or "pointed," as a builder would say.

The builder explained to the boys that he would use 2x4-inch studding, setting it 16 inches on centers, which is the proper distance apart to receive the lathing.

On top of the first floor lining he laid out all walls and partitions, then to these lines he laid a 2x4 shoe to receive the studding of walls and partitions.

On this shoe he laid out first the position of

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each door and window, then the position of each studding.

From this shoe he laid out a set of plates to go on the top end of wall and partition studs.

The corner studs only were to go through both stories, therefore all other wall and partition studs were of one length and could be cut in a box.

First, the corner studding was raised, then set plumb and held rigidly in place with strips of wood called stay-laths. These were nailed on the inside of the building so that they would not have to be removed when the walls were boarded.

After this was accomplished he raised the wall and partition studding, nailing it at the bottom and placing the plate at the tip and nailing it to head of studs. He doubled the plate at the top by placing another 2x4 above the first one, and told the boys that studding

around all windows and door openings should be doubled.

After this he framed and placed the second floor joist, cut in the bridging, and laid the rough floor. The boys tried their hand at all this and learned that rough floors should be laid diagonally with the joist.

Upon this floor was laid out the second-story partitions and then they proceeded with the plates, framing, and raising in the same manner as described for the first floor.

The next step when this was done was the framing and placing of the attic joist.

Before Mr. Reeves proceeded with the roof-framing he boarded up the walls, first going all over the building to see that walls and partitions were straight, all corners plumb, and pointing the spaces below the sill with cement mortar.

The wall-boarding, which was a cheap quality of matched and dressed boards, was

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put on by the boys, who by this time had become really efficient helpers.

“Now,” said Mr. Reeves, one day, when the walls were all boarded, “we will frame the roof, and that is the most difficult problem the carpenter usually has to contend with, as it involves a higher degree of mathematics than most workmen have. Most of them can arrive at an approximate result by using a steel square only. The length of main, jack-hip, and valley rafters can all be figured accurately, as every rafter represents the hypotenuse of a right-angle triangle.”

The hypotenuse of an angle can be determined by square root, trigonometry, and by logarithms. Algebra, geometry, mensuration, trigonometry, logarithms, calculus,—what a list of bugaboos for the average boy! but the boy who is out for a technical education must master them all.

By the use of the trigonometrical functions

and a table of sines and tangents, we can determine the length of any side of a triangle when two sides are given.

Let us see if our boys can understand this method as applied to determining the length of a main rafter.

Our building is twenty-one feet wide and we wish to have the roof pitch ten inches rise to twelve inches run; that is for every twelve inches horizontal distance the vertical distance is ten inches, and as the ridge-line is in the centre of the building the base line of our triangle is ten feet, six inches, or exactly half the full width of building; now multiply ten and one-half feet by ten inches and we have 105 inches, or eight feet, nine inches, as the rise or vertical side of our triangle.

The trigonometrical names for the three sides of our triangle are as follows: The base line is called the cosine, the vertical side

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the tangent, and the diagonal line which we wish to find the length of, is called the secant.

The next stage of our operation is to find what is the pitch of our roof in degrees. Degrees, minutes, and seconds are the standard of measurement for the distance between straight diverging lines.

Every circle, large or small, contains 360 degrees. Take a carriage wheel for instance, having twelve spokes; the spokes are as many degrees apart as twelve will go into 360, or thirty degrees. If there were sixteen spokes they would be twenty-two and one-half degrees apart.

In our case of the rafter it is not quite so easy to find the degree of pitch, but we can do it by dividing the vertical distance by the bare distance, and the result will be the tangent expressed decimally; then in our table of tangents we find a corresponding decimal and on the margin read the degrees. Next we take

the degrees found and look in the table of secants, and find given there a whole number and a decimal.

The decimal represents how much longer the diagonal line is than the base line per foot of distance, so that all we have to do is to multiply this given secant by our base distance, and the result will be the length of the diagonal side of our triangle, or the unknown side.

To perform the example in our case, eight feet, nine inches vertical distance expressed decimally would read 8.75 (as nine inches is 75 one-hundredths of a foot) and this sum divided by ten feet, six inches base distance, expressed decimally would read 10.5. Now, as we are dividing the less number by the greater the answer must be less than a whole number, or a decimal which is less than one.

For instance; a pie divided by four hungry boys becomes a decimal pie, as far as each

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boy is concerned. One pie with the addition of two ciphers, divided by four equals .25, and .25 equals one quarter of a whole number, therefore it is as easy to divide a lesser number by a greater as it is to divide a greater by a lesser, the only trouble with boys being to get the decimal point in the right place. And thus the whole theory of decimals is explained.

For our sum we have 8.75 divided by 10.5 equals .833 (nearly) and in our table of tangents that figure is opposite 39 degrees and 50 minutes, and in the table of secants 39° 50' read 1.30. Now, if our diagonal line is .30 longer than our base line for each foot of the base line, then the whole diagonal line is .30 longer than our base line, thus 10.5 which is our base line multiplied by .30 equals 3.15, and this added to 10.5 equals 13.65 feet, or thirteen feet and eight inches, approximately.

This same result would be obtained by mul-

tipling the whole secant 1.30 by 10.5, and would save the operation of adding 10.5 and 3.15 together.

The table of sines and tangents can be found in many technical handbooks and in the books of any high school library.

As our boys would be a long time framing a roof if they had to use this method for each different length of rafter, Mr. Reeves showed them a quick method and one that was accurate enough for his wooden roof.

As he had determined on a roof-pitch ten inches rise to twelve inches run, and as he had found that the base line of the triangle was ten feet, six inches, he took a steel square and placed a finger nail on the number 12 of the long end, and another finger on the number 10 of the short end; then he measured ten and a half of these spaces along the top edge of the rafter and had the length of the rafter. The top and bottom cuts of the rafter were

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obtained by keeping the square in the position indicated, and marking along the side of the short end for the top cut and along the edge of the long end for the bottom cut.

The boys watched Mr. Reeves board the roof and they helped build the verandas.

The next step was to put on the outside finish, set the window and door frames, then shingle the roof and walls.

They also, as the days went on, took a hand in the inside rough work; saw the gas and plumbing pipes put in, and then came lath and plaster.

After this was the interior finish; doors, sash, casings, etc., and then the painting, hardware, and the plumbing fixtures.

The boys watched with interest the plumbers, heaters, turners, and electricians.

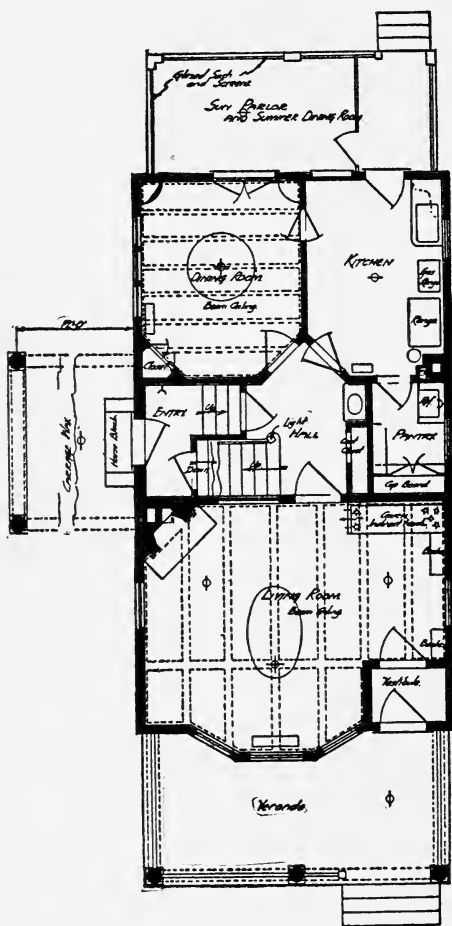
At last the house was built and a splendid house it was! A very gem of a house! Of course it was small, about 21x37,—containing

less than 800 square feet, which is a small home as homes go, but think of the possibilities of Mr. Reeves's plan—and all realized!

Jimmie Suter looked with pride one day at the fine living room, with its open fire-place and a ventilating grate, wainscoted walls, beamed ceiling, and built-in couches and book-cases.

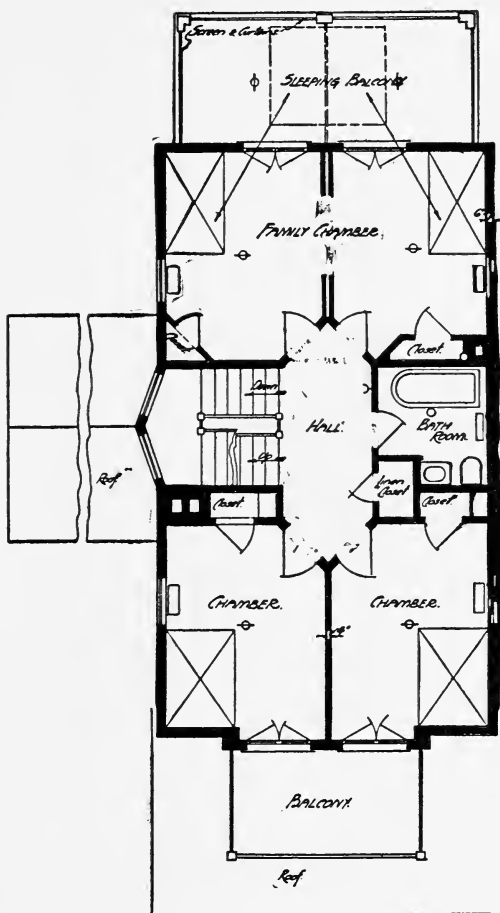
The prevailing color of this room was a rich dark red. The dining room had a built-in china closet, wainscoted walls with plate rail at top, and a beamed ceiling, and was connected through large French windows to the glass-enclosed summer dining veranda at the rear. The color scheme in this room was white and gold with mahogany stain for sashes and doors. The hall was finished in natural wood, with mahogany for stair-rail and balusters.

The following pages show the arrangement of rooms on the first and second floors.



F. D. Moon, Architect, New York

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
THE HOUSE THAT THE BOYS BUILT



F. D. Moon, Architect, New York.

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

THE HOUSE THAT THE BOYS BUILT

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“Do you like it, Jimmie?” asked Mr. Reeves, when the boy’s eye had taken in the whole pretty picture.

“Yes, sir. It’s the oddest and prettiest home in America, I’ll bet,” said Jimmie Suter.

CHAPTER IX

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

“Look! there’s a light!” cried Lucci.

Jimmie and Lucci, who had spent the time after school in Mr. Reeves’s new house, were hurrying home in the dark when all at once to their surprise they saw a light in one of the rooms of the old vacant mansion.

The boys stood for a moment in the road and watched it, but it disappeared shortly, leaving the old house, as it always was, in gloom.

“What a strange thing!” cried Lucci. “There must be somebody in that house.”

“No one has been living in that house for years,” declared Jimmie. “It belonged at one time to a wealthy family named Beard,

but after the father died, the family scattered; the sons spent all the money and the house was not occupied for years, until it was bought by some people and turned into a sort of road-house, but it didn't pay, I heard my father say, and—Hark! what was that?"

"What?" said Lucci, almost in a whisper. "I heard nothing."

"I heard a door shut or a window slam or something," said Jimmie in frightened tones.

"Down, Lucci—hide, some one is coming!" and suiting the action to the word the boys dropped flat on the ground in the shadow of the wall, just as the old gate was pushed open and a man came out.

He stood for the briefest moment looking all about him, and then walked rapidly toward the village, evidently thinking that no one had seen him.

When he was out of sight, the two boys emerged from their hiding-places and ran for

the Camp, looking back every now and then at the old mansion to see if any more lights were visible.

But it was shrouded in gloom and the mystery of the light was the one topic of conversation when the boys breathed freely. They could talk of nothing else but the light and the man, and wondered what business took him into that old ruin alone at night.

“Do you know, I feel that we have stumbled against a big mystery,” declared Lucci, when the boys were safe in the cottage.

“I didn’t have a good look at the man, did you?” said Jimmie.

“No, I only saw his legs,” laughed Lucci. “He wore black trousers, that’s about all I could tell about him.”

“It’s a queer place for a man to go,” mused Jimmie. “Let’s watch to-morrow night at the same time and see if he comes again or if there’s a light—and we won’t

mention this to a soul. Not even Mr. Reeves; we'll wait until we are sure."

Then the boys sat down to supper, admitting that it was rather lonesome without Rand and Philip at the Camp that Saturday night.

After supper they busied themselves until bed-time and planned lots of sport for the following week.

The next morning a bright September sun streamed into the room before the sleepy lads awoke and jumped out of bed.

"It's Sunday morning, and a glorious one!" cried Jimmie, running to the window to drink in the air, clear and morning sweet. Then he dropped on his knees beside the bed to say his prayers.

"It's warm," cried Lucci, sometime later; "it's as warm as mid-summer."

"Just the morning for a bath in the lake,

Lucci," cried Jimmie, and slipping on his bath-robe he went outdoors and down to the water's edge.

He got aboard the house-boat where he donned his bathing trunks and was just in the act of diving off the raft when Lucci appeared.

"Phew! it looks cold," cried Lucci.

"It's glorious," returned Jimmie, swinging himself, dripping wet, onto the raft, and then proceeding to take another plunge.

Then Lucci ran back to camp to prepare breakfast while Jimmie, glowing all over from his splendid exercise, dressed hurriedly and started to feed the hens and pigeons.

Jimmie whistled and trilled, calling and cooing to his pets who fluttered about him. At last his task was done and he walked back to the cottage. He began to sing—perhaps because he felt so happy, perhaps because it

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was Sunday morning, bright and peaceful, and the very aspect of the Camp seemed to breathe of the beautiful Sabbath.

Jimmie's voice rang out clear and wild and sweet in fluttering tremolo, and over and over again as though half unconscious of the words, but enraptured with the melody, he dwelt on the well-known anthem:

“ ‘Awake, my soul, and with the sun,’ ” and stopped only when Lucci appeared and called him to breakfast.

There was a spotless cloth on the little table in honor of the day and Lucci had gathered a bunch of asters, pink and purple.

“Oh! but I'm hungry!” cried Jimmie, as the delicious home-made brown bread and baked beans that Jimmie's mother had sent the previous day and which Lucci had served piping hot, disappeared, as only two boys could make them disappear.

After breakfast, when the dishes were

cleared away and the camp chores were done, the boys put on their best clothes to be all ready for church and then sat up in the look-out and talked over plans until the church bells told them it was time to start.

They did not pay the promised visit to the haunted house that night, because Sunday evening was always "home evening" in the Suter cottage.

But the very next night the two boys repaired to the spot where they had seen the man two nights before, and almost at the same moment as on that first occasion a faint light appeared in one of the dark windows.

A short time after the noise was heard and once again the gate opened and the same man sneaked out and walked quickly in the direction of the town.

"What does it mean?" cried Jimmie, who, having waited in vain to see if the man would return, arose and walked back to the Camp

with Lucci and then bade him a reluctant "good-night."

"Good-night," returned Lucci, "and I wish you were going to stay all night."

"I wish I could, Lucci; you don't feel afraid, do you?"

"Oh, no! I'm not the least bit afraid, but it seems terribly lonesome to-night; it's all because of the haunted house, I suppose."

"Now, you mustn't think anything about that," said Jimmie. "That man we saw coming out of that old house has some business there and nobody's going to hurt you," he added, giving his friend a little pat of encouragement.

"But what business could take a man into an old house every night, and make him act so queerly?" persisted Lucci.

"Well, Lucci, we are not sure that he goes there every night. We've only seen him two nights, you know."

“Yes, I know, Jimmie, but I’ll bet he goes there every night.”

“Nonsense. I can’t believe that;” and Jimmie tried to laugh the lad’s fears away, and then turned the conversation to other channels, hoping that Lucci would forget all about the haunted house.

At the same time Jimmie Suter made up his mind that he would watch the old house in the North Road alone, and see if he could unravel the mystery.

Lucci was alone in the Camp much of the time, and therefore Jimmie decided that perhaps it would be well not to tell him too much about the haunted house.

The very next day after school Jimmie and Lucci spent their time around the Camp, but when it began to grow dark Jimmie left Lucci safely in the cottage and sped like a deer to the North Road.

Taking his place behind some bushes that

hung over the stone wall of the old place, Jimmie waited.

“I’m afraid I’ll be late for supper,” thought the lad, “and father won’t like that, but I must see.”

The thought had hardly flashed into his mind when a light appeared in the same window of the old mansion that had been lighted on the two previous occasions, and shortly after it disappeared; then the gate opened and the man came out and hurried away in the same direction.

Jimmie’s heart was beating fast. It was now very dark and he realized that he was quite alone.

For a short time he remained perfectly still in his hiding-place, then he emerged cautiously and ran as if for dear life toward home.

The mystery of the haunted house,—whatever it might be, was still unsolved.

CHAPTER X

THE MYSTERY

JIMMIE knew he was late, but his mind was so filled with his recent experience that he thought little about the time until his father brought him up sharply when he said, the moment our hero opened the door, "Where have you been, sir?"

Jimmie knew by the tone that his father was displeased, but before he could reply, his parent said quickly—"I don't like it, Jimmie, and if you cannot obey me in regard to the arrangements we have made, I shall have to forbid you to go to the Camp at all."

"I am very sorry," began Jimmie, and then in a few words he made a clean breast of

the whole matter, telling his father all about the mysterious light in the old house on the North Road; how he and Lucci had watched and had seen the man two nights in succession, and then went on to relate how he had gone alone that night and watched because he did not wish to frighten Lucci.

When he had finished his narrative, told in breathless, boyish wonder, a smile broke over his father's rather stern face.

"Well, I'm glad, Jimmie, you were so thoughtful of Lucci, but I must say I did not know until to-night that you had such a big imagination."

"But I didn't imagine it, father," protested Jimmie. "I saw it with my own two eyes."

"I, too, have seen a light in a certain window of that old house," said Mr. Suter. "Anybody who happens to be in that vicinity at sunset, knows that the sun's rays strike

one of those old windows, lighting it up vividly. It is the reflection, my boy, that is all," and Jimmie's father smiled again at the look of astonishment on the boy's face.

"I've seen that, too, father. I know just what you mean, but this light is different and besides there is the man. How do you account for him?"

"I don't, Jimmie. He can account for himself, that is his business, but my boy, you are trying hard to make a great mystery out of a sunset. Pshaw! don't waste precious time like that," and so saying Mr. Suter opened his evening paper, leaving Jimmie in a rather uncertain frame of mind.

"That light was no sunset, and that man is there for some purpose," declared Jimmie in his own mind, "and I'll find out what it all means."

Anybody who saw Jimmie Suter's firm jaw as he made this mental resolution would feel

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reasonably certain that the boy would succeed.

He could not get the haunted house out of his mind that night and the very last thing he thought about as he turned over to go to sleep was this:

“I’ll find out, but I’ll not tell a soul till I know.”

The very next day, when school was over Jimmie did not go as usual to the Camp. He saw Hank Allen, Charlie Baxter and some of the boys of the school, accompanying Lucci for a cruise in the house-boat. When urged to go, Jimmie made the excuse that he was going to be busy elsewhere.

Accordingly, when the coast was clear, our hero made a straight line for the old house in North Road, and when he reached it, let himself over the stone wall into what had once been a garden, but which was now over-

run with weeds and wild growths of every description.

He made his way through the tangled paths to the very steps of the house, mounted them and stood on the broad piazza, the floor of which was quite rotten and filled with great cracks. Jimmie picked his steps over them and peered into one of the long windows that opened on a level with the broad veranda.

The room that he could see was empty, save for an old broken table and a couple of chairs.

Jimmie's heart began to beat faster as he cautiously raised the long window and stepped inside.

He walked across the creaking boards and reached the wide hall, where he stood for a second looking at the broad flight of stairs.

Did he dare to climb them?

It was in the front room at the head of

these stairs where the light had been. He must see what was in that room.

Jimmie put his foot on the lowest step and waited,—then he went on, but he hadn't taken three steps when there was a terrible bang and like a flash he was down those stairs and across the hall. He darted like some wild thing into the room he had first entered, only to find that the window he had left wide open was shut.

With wildly beating heart he opened it, his hands almost trembling. But he was outside at last, and with one jump from the old veranda down into the shrubbery he gained the stone wall and never stopped running until he was in the road.

“What a goose I am, anyway?” he said to himself. “The fastenings of that window were so old and rotten that they gave way and it slammed down—that's what made the noise.”

But the boy felt that he had had enough of the haunted house for one afternoon, so he hurried away to the Camp and was just in time for a sail in the *Marjorie* to the other side, where everybody went ashore and deep into the woods to gather chestnuts.

When they had a good supply they hurried back, got aboard the house-boat, and when out in the middle of the lake Jimmie Suter made a fire in the tiny stove and placed on it a kettle of water.

When it was boiling he dropped in the chestnuts and after a few minutes the feast was started.

Do you like boiled chestnuts? The boys of Pigeon Camp thought it was the very jolliest way to eat them, and they had a splendid time until it was time to start for home.

Indeed, Jimmie Suter was enjoying himself so thoroughly that he forgot all about the time until Charlie Baxter took out his

watch and held it before our hero's face.

Instantly, he remembered his father's words about being late and he started at once to get the *Marjorie* near shore.

Everybody helped, and in a short time it was near enough to the float for Jimmie to try a long jump. He landed safely, and waving a hand, hurried on his way, but he turned shortly and cried out:

"Good-bye, boys, I must run—look out for everything, Lucci," then he was gone at once, while the boys got ashore leisurely and helped moor the house-boat.

When Jimmie reached his own house he was glad to find that he was home in good season. He helped his mother by giving the baby her supper of bread and milk, and when that was over he caught little brother Tod in his arms and played "pig-a-back" until the little fellow's bed time.

During supper Jimmie was on the point of

telling his father and mother about the adventure in the haunted house that afternoon, but the fear that his parents would laugh at him kept him silent.

He thought about it, however, and went over every detail in his mind, admitting to himself that he had been badly scared when the window banged in the haunted house.

He longed to go there again. He was more than curious to look over the old place, especially that room in which the light was seen. If only he had somebody with him, Jimmie felt that he would not be afraid in the least. He would rather not tell Lucci, but his thoughts began to centre around a boy who he felt would be as eager as he himself was to solve the mystery.

He must tell Rand Cotter, and having reached this decision Jimmie got pen and paper and wrote the following letter:

“Sunnyview, Oct. 2, 19—.

“DEAR RAND: I want you to be sure to come out here Friday and stay over until Monday, if you possibly can. I want your help in solving a mystery. I might as well tell you what it is now.

“The old house on the North Road, as you know, has had the reputation for years and years of being haunted. Last week Lucci and I saw lights in one of the windows. Afterwards we saw a man come out and hurry away towards the village. Lucci, as you know is alone at the Camp most of the time and it seemed to me that he was a good bit frightened, so I wouldn't let him go near the place again. So I watched *alone* the third time and *I saw the light again and the same man again*.

“He is no ghost. He's a real man. I feel sure of that, and he always hurries away in the same direction.

“To-day after school I went into the haunted house alone, but a window slammed down and I got scared (don’t laugh) and I got out of that old house quicker than I ever did anything before in my life.

“Now all this means there’s a mystery, and together we may find out what it is. I have not told anybody about this, but I thought if you came out here Friday, we might watch that night. I won’t have to hurry home for supper, as I do on other nights, because that is my night at Camp and we can slip away before Philip or Lucci thinks very much about it.

“Hoping that you can spend this Friday at Pigeon Camp, I remain, Your friend,

“JIMMIE SUTER.”

This letter was sent on its way and our hero began to count the days until the day that brought them all to the camp.

CHAPTER XI

FIRST APPEARANCE OF "TROUBLE."

Two days after Jimmie had written the letter to his friend in the city he received a brief note that Rand would be at the Camp the coming Friday without fail.

The days of that week seemed to drag on because Jimmie was so eager to tell Rand all he knew. He went about as usual doing his chores and enjoying sport after school, but under it all he was full of suppressed excitement over the thoughts of what he and Rand were going to do. Lucci, too, looked forward to Friday though he did not know anything about Jimmie's plan.

The little artist always welcomed the weekend parties that brought the four boys to the

scene of their summer's fun. And so it was that after school on Friday Lucci and Jimmie fairly flew over the road that took them to Pigeon Camp.

A pleasant surprise awaited them when they found Philip and Rand up in the lookout waiting for them.

"Why! how in the world did you fellows get out here so soon? Any school for you to-day?" questioned Jimmie.

"Of course we've been to school," said Rand, "and after it was out my father brought me here in his automobile, and we stopped for Philip on the way out and surprised him in the very act of half-drowning a dog. You wouldn't think that of Phil, now would you? A member of the S. F. B. to say nothing of his standing in the S. P. C. A."

Rand pointed scornfully at Philip, whose eyes twinkled as he answered—

"I guess you would half-drown a dog, if a lady wept and begged you to save her darling Fido."

"How did it happen? Tell us about it," said Jimmie, with a gleam of interest.

"Well, it was this way," began Phil. "On my way home from school I met a carriage, in which a lady was driving. Sitting up alongside of her was a handsome Boston terrier. He was just as well-behaved and as nice as could be when, scat! like a flash he was out of that carriage and into the road looking for trouble and he got it! He ran plumb into it! I guess dogs scent trouble 'way head of time, for there, right in the road, just as if he had dropped from the skies, was the sorriest-looking bull pup I ever saw. There was a growl and then they went for each other.

"The lady lashed that bull pup with the riding whip and I helped, but 'twas no use.

The bull pup wouldn't let go of Fido. I guess he'd be holding on yet if I hadn't rushed into a house for a pail of water. Just then Rand and his father came along and they helped. But I soaked the bull pup and all the time that lady was screaming 'Save Fido!' At last the terrier got away and jumped up into that carriage and the lady whipped up her horse and drove away like mad. Then that bunch of trouble, that sad-looking bull pup, with a weak eye and a torn ear, comes over, gives a couple of wags, and as much as asked me what I thought of him. Well, I told him, and then I got into the auto with Rand and here we are, and not three minutes ago 'Trouble' walked up to us wagging his stump of a tail, and it looks as if he were going to stay awhile."

"Where is he?" cried Jimmie and Lucci in a breath. "Is he any good?"

Philip opened the cottage door where

Trouble, his black nose between his paws, was stretched out as if he belonged there, but at the sight of the boys he was on his feet, waiting expectantly.

“Come here, old sport, let’s have a look at you,” said Jimmie, and Trouble came forward, wagging his tail furiously.

“No collar! I’ll bet he’s a homeless cur, though I kind o’ like the looks of him,” mused Jimmie.

“I do, too,” said Phil, “he’s all right.”

“Well, say, Trouble, you know your name, don’t you?” said Rand, while the tail wagged harder than ever. “We don’t mind if you join us, provided you mind and keep out of mischief—see?”

Then all hands went down to the lake and got aboard the *Marjorie*, followed by Trouble, who stood his ground, and then sprang aboard like a veteran camper.

For a long time, as they sailed around the

lake, the conversation was general; after a while, however, Rand called Jimmie to one side and said in a whisper—

“Say, Jimmie, I’m burning up with curiosity to see the light in the haunted house. When are we going?”

“To-night,” whispered Jimmie. “We’ll have supper early at the Camp, then you and I must slip away and watch in the same place.”

“Hush! Mum’s the word!” said Rand, as Lucci drew near.

The house-boat was near the shore at this time when all at once, to the amazement of the boys, Trouble began to sniff the air, and the next moment was into the water and made straight for the woods.

“Now, what in the world does he think he’s going to find, I wonder,” mused Philip.

“Perhaps he scents a fox,” said Rand.

“Or a woodchuck,” observed Lucci.

“Or an old shoe,” laughed Jimmie, when Trouble reappeared at the edge of the water shaking an old shoe in his mouth with evident satisfaction. He finally threw it down and stood off looking at the boys with a sort of challenge that made them all grin, as only boys can grin when a dog appears to have a fellow-feeling for mischief.

“Of all the fool dogs I ever met,” began Rand, when he saw Jimmie make a sign.

“Let’s go ashore,” said Rand “and have supper at once. I’m hungry.”

CHAPTER XII

THE VIGIL

SUPPER in camp that evening was a very simple affair, at least that is what Lucci declared when he placed bread and butter and apple sauce on the table. But Philip made some delicious cocoa and just as everybody was about to sit down he placed before their hungry eyes a cake that made the boys sit up straight and whistle.

“Ha-a! that looks tempting!” cried Jimmie; “give me my piece now.”

“No, sir, you eat your bread and butter and apple sauce like a good little boy,” said Philip in patronizing tones, “and then you’ll have a piece of cake to eat with your cup of cocoa.”

“Say, ma! gim’me a little piece,” pleaded Rand. “If you don’t I’ll spill my apple sass,” he added in a high childish treble.

The words had hardly passed his lips when “ma,” the mischievous Phil, dropped a spoonful of hot cocoa down Rand’s neck that made him jump and set the others in roars of laughter.

“What kind of cake is it?” asked Lucci, when order was restored and the bread and butter had disappeared as if by magic.

“It’s a Dutch apple cake,” said Philip. “Mr. Reeves brought it over just before we started for the house-boat, but you fellows never saw him, so I kept it a secret to surprise you.”

“Wasn’t that jolly kind of him?” said Rand.

“You bet it was,” went on Philip, “and he told me that he was coming over here some Saturday night to supper, and he’ll cook it

himself. He said he'd show us the real way to have a Saturday night supper at camp."

"That's good!" cried the boys in chorus. Mr. Reeves had already become a prime favorite, and something interesting was always forthcoming when he joined their ranks.

"Now," said Jimmie, when the last mouthful was swallowed, "you boys may clean up everything in good shape. Rand and I have important business elsewhere—see?"

"No, I don't see it at all," protested Philip; "what's *your* business is *our* business, isn't that so, Lucci?"

"Well, I should say so!"

"That is quite true," observed Jimmie, "but in this particular case you must trust to us; we'll let you into the secret all in good time."

"Oh! if it's one of your schemes, Jimmie, go ahead," said Philip; "we can wait."

Then Jimmie and Rand went out of the cot-

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tage leaving the other two boys clearing away the dishes.

They walked rapidly, taking short cuts over the fields until they came to the North Road.

Jimmie found his accustomed hiding-place behind the clump of bushes, and from this point he could have a good view of the old mansion.

The boys had hardly settled themselves when a faint light appeared in one of the rooms. The boys never took their eyes from it until a few moments later when it disappeared, and almost immediately the dark figure of the man could be seen emerging from the old gate.

"Let's follow him," whispered Jimmie; "let's see where he goes," and suiting the action to the word they started after the retreating figure, keeping well behind and walking in the shadow.

Down the long North Road hurried the strange man until he reached a field on the out-skirts of Sunnyview. He jumped lightly over the straggling fence that surrounded it and crossed the beaten path with a brisk walk, while every movement was watched by the two lads who followed.

At the end of the field was a short lane that turned directly to the Wilber cottage, and it was at the turn of this lane, by the dim light of the street lamp, that Jimmie Suter made the startling discovery that the man they had been following was Shad Wilber's father!

The boys stood perfectly still and watched him while he lifted the latch and entered his own house.

"Jackson Wilber!" exclaimed Jimmie.

"Well, if that doesn't beat all!"

"So he's the ghost!" cried Rand, as the boys began to retrace their steps.

"I'll bet there's something back of all this;

it's a bigger mystery than we thought it was."

"But we'll find it out," said Jimmie; "we'll not give up yet."

"Wouldn't I like to know why he goes into that old house every night just about dark," mused Rand.

"And into that particular room," cried Jimmie. "He goes in there for something, that's certain."

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Rand. Tomorrow is Saturday and the four of us will go through that old house. It's open to anybody who cares to go in and we'll see if there is any clue to this mystery."

All the way back to the Camp the boys talked of their plans to go through the haunted house the next day. When they reached the cottage they peered through one of the small windows into the kitchen.

Lucci and Philip, sitting at the table play-

ing checkers, never saw them, but Trouble, snoring near the stove, was erect in an instant.

“Hold on a minute,” whispered Rand; “let’s have a little fun—See if we can scare ’em.”

So saying he gave the door a kick that made the two lads at the checker table jump to their feet.

“Ha-a-a! leta me in!” snarled Rand, imitating to a turn the swarthy Italian, while Jimmie, crouched in the darkness at a corner of the window, where he had a good view of the interior of the room, smothered a laugh.

“Leta me in, I tella you! I haf a knife—I will breaka the door!”

“Pietro!” cried Lucci, in a voice plainly audible to the two mischief-makers, chuckling at the success of their scheme. “You can’t come in here,” shouted Philip, while Trouble attentively barked and whined.

“I am one greata big man—bigger de arm—bigger de mus—I killa you!”

Rand followed this dreadful threat by a succession of kicks that frightened Philip and Lucci so thoroughly that they made a dive for the little room off the kitchen.

“They are going to get out of the back window,” whispered Jimmie, while Rand, shaking with laughter, began a series of exclamations intended to further scare the boys inside.

All at once there was a sound, and Jimmie and Rand went to the rear window just in time to catch the two.

“You!” cried Lucci and Philip in one breath, and then and there Rand and Jimmie were set upon and punched and rolled over and over. Trouble was on hand, too, but indeed the lads were laughing so hard that Philip and Lucci met with little resistance.

CHAPTER XIII

A SATURDAY HUNT

“WHAT is on the program for to-day, Jimmie?” asked Philip, early the next morning, when camp chores finished, the boys had gathered in front of the barn to watch the pigeons. “Is there anything special to-day?”

“Yes,” said Jimmie, “we are all going to hunt.”

“Going to hunt!” repeated Lucci, while Trouble, who to all appearances was asleep, became alert in an instant.

“What are you going to hunt? Woodchucks?”

"No, we're thinking of going on a hunt for ghosts; do you care to try?"

"I do," said Phil, "if it's done in broad day light, I guess I won't be scared, that is if you don't go into the old house in North Road."

"But that is the very place we have selected," declared Jimmie, "and now's the time. Come along."

So saying he made a dash for the road followed by the other boys.

"I'm half afraid to go into that ruin," ventured Philip, as they came in sight of the old mansion; but when Jimmie told him to go back to camp and cut out pictures, Philip laughingly declared that he would be the first to go into the haunted house alone.

"I don't think you'll go alone," returned Jimmie. "Trouble will look out for that," and the bull pup wagged his tail as if to verify the statement.

The boys had now reached the very gate of the old house and following Jimmie they picked their way through the overgrowth of vines and weeds till they reached the steps. They mounted and stepped gingerly across the rotten floor of the piazza to the long window that Jimmie had tried a few days previous.

Rand held it open till all were safely inside, when he carefully let it down and then stood with the others looking around the empty room.

“Let’s go upstairs,” said Jimmie, but on second thought it was decided to go into all the rooms downstairs first. This was done, the boys peering into closets and crevices all over the deserted mansion, seeing little for their pains but cobwebs and empty walls.

When the search downstairs was completed they started to mount the broad staircase, but Trouble darted ahead and was out

of sight before they had taken three steps.

All at once the boys stood still. Trouble gave a bark and began to paw the floor of some room above.

"I'm afraid," said Lucci, "there might be thieves hiding up there—we'd be all killed and no one would ever know."

"Pshaw!" growled Jimmie, trying hard to appear brave, "let's come on and see what Trouble's barking about."

"My father would come here for me," said Rand in a loud voice intended to acquaint any "thieves" who might be prowling around with that fact.

"I'm not afraid of thieves. It's ghosts I'm thinking of," whispered Philip.

"There's no such thing as ghosts," said Jimmie.

He had hardly said the word when Trouble appeared before their eyes at the head of the stairs, carrying in his mouth what seemed

to be a head of red hair. With one cry of terror the four brave hunters were down those stairs, almost falling over each other in their wild efforts to gain the window. It was thrown hastily up and then slammed down before Trouble, who had followed, could get out.

"It's only a red wig," said Jimmie, looking in at the dog. "Horrors! I thought it was a human head."

"It scared daylights out o' me," cried Philip. "I was sure it was alive."

"What great, big scare-crows we are," declared Lucci. "There's Trouble in there looking out at us as if he thoroughly enjoyed it."

"Look here, boys. I'm going back and I'm going upstairs this time," said Jimmie quietly.

So saying, he opened the window and once again the boys were in the deserted house.

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They picked up the red wig and after examining it carefully threw it on the floor and made straight for the hall and the broad staircase.

This was highly satisfactory to Trouble, who bounded up the stairs before them and led the way into the very chamber where Jimmie had seen the light.

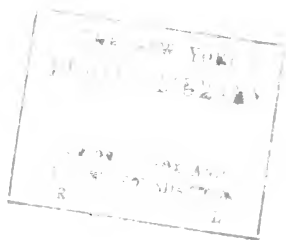
When the boys entered the room they stood perfectly still for a moment, gazing at a strange sight.

In the middle of the empty room was a bundle of old ragged clothes. There seemed to be three or four suits and as many wigs—black and gray, but all of them in the last stages of dilapidation.

Philip caught up an old faded blue coat with a sort of cape, and a gray slouch hat, and put them on. Then he marched up and down the room to the amusement of the other boys.



THE BOYS STOOD GAZING AT A STRANGE SIGHT. — *Page 134.*



At this point Jimmie Suter's sharp eyes saw a candle on the mantel.

"I think this explains the light," observed Jimmie, taking the candle in his hand, "but it looks as if we had really stumbled on a mystery, all the same."

The boys took up the old clothes gingerly and looked them over, while Trouble sniffed and shook each article in turn.

After awhile the other rooms upstairs were explored but nothing else was discovered, and the boys went back to the old clothes and the wigs.

"Well, I think we've discovered the ghost," said Jimmie.

"Who is it?" questioned Philip, puzzled by Jimmie's looks.

"I'd rather not tell just now," was the answer.

"I suppose these things," ventured Lucci, pointing to the old clothes, "have been here

ever since the owners of this house moved out; don't you think so?"

Jimmie looked doubtful. "I don't agree with you, Lucci. I think they have been brought here recently."

"I don't," cried Philip. "I'll bet some past and gone tenant of the house was interested in private theatricals at one time and owned all these wigs and things—why! what in the world would anybody want them for now!"

"That is just the point," returned Jimmie, "that is the mystery, and it is just what I am going to try to find out."

After this they all left the room with its strange contents, and went downstairs and out of the house.

The ghost hunt in the haunted house was over.

That night Jimmie and Rand did not watch to see if the light appeared and if Jackson

Wilber came out, but the following week Jimmie Suter watched alone every night, and neither the light nor a trace of the man was seen.

Our hero was sorely puzzled at this turn of affairs, but declared he would not give up.

About two weeks later he and Lucci went into the old house after school one day to look at the wigs, but they had disappeared and not a sign of the old clothes was to be found.

“Strange,” said Lucci, “I thought we had solved the mystery when we found the old clothes and the candle and all.”

“And now that they have disappeared,” Jimmie went on, “it is more mysterious than ever”

“I’m afraid we’ll have to give it up,” said Lucci.

“I’ll never give up,” said Jimmie.

CHAPTER XIV

A BEAN-HOLE

“Good morning, Lucci; visitors allowed to-day?” asked Mr. Reeves the following Friday morning, just as Lucci was leaving Pigeon Camp for school.

“Good morning,” returned the boy; “visitors always welcome.”

“Well, Lucci, I promised you boys that I’d come over here some day and show you how to bake beans in true camp style, and as it is a good plan when you decide to have them to keep a small fire going all day to get the ground for six feet around as dry and warm as possible, I thought I’d come over here to-day and keep house.”

“I’m glad you did,” said Lucci; “you’ll

find everything you want, I think, and you'll have Trouble for company. I wish I could stay, too, but I must be off to school."

"The boys are all coming to-night, are they not?"

"Yes, sir, I think we can count on all of them this week," and then Lucci hurried away, leaving Mr. Reeves in charge of the camp.

That was a long day in school with Lucci and Jimmie talking things over at recess and every other spare minute. What a jolly time ahead for that Friday!

And when school was over and the four little campers met, a cheer went up from Pigeon Camp that could be heard for a long way.

Their good friend Mr. Reeves greeted them warmly and then they all went aboard the *Marjorie* and fished till it was almost dark.

Then they all returned to camp and had supper and when that was over and the dishes cleared away, the boys followed Mr. Reeves to the spot that he had selected for a "bean-hole."

All that day, as we know, their visitor had kept a fire going just enough to keep a good heat without being very hot, but after supper as the boys stood around and watched his every move, Mr. Reeves scraped away the burning coals and right in the middle of the spot dug a hole about two feet deep.

Into this hole the burning coals were put back and a roaring fire built, the campers running back and forth piling on the sticks.

"Only hard wood now," said the man, "and in about an hour we'll have as pretty a bed of coals as you'd want to see."

In the meantime the boys got the beans and put them in the kettle that was swung over the fire; not too near, but where the

water would keep hot while they were undergoing a sort of parboiling.

“Don’t you soak your beans over night?” asked Philip, at this point. “I know my mother always does.”

“No, sir,” replied the chief cook. “An old camper, the one who taught me how to make a bean-hole, used to say that soaking beans over night was nonsense—if a bean isn’t willing to soften up after a good parboiling like those beans before us are getting, there’re not fit to eat. He used to say, too: ‘There’s beans, and then again there’s beans, but the flavor of a good year-old Maine bean can’t be beat.’ ”

By this time the camp fire was a glowing mass of hard wood coals, so hot that one could get no nearer than when the pile was all ablaze.

Taking the kettle of beans from the crane-stick, Mr. Reeves poured off the water and

showed them to the boys nicely parboiled. Then he poured in some fresh water, put a very small onion in the bottom of the pot, added salt, pepper, a dash of mustard, a tablespoonful of molasses, and on top a good-sized piece of pork.

The cover was then put on tightly with its flange overlapping all sides, so as to keep out the ashes and fire.

The beans were now ready for the bean-hole.

First of all, Mr. Reeves carefully knocked away with a pole all the blazing embers, because if there are embers left in among the coals when they burn out they have a little passage for air and a draught gives such a heat that the beans would burn to a cinder in a short time.

The hole was now cleared of its mass of fiery coals as far as possible for the heat, the pole serving as a shovel, and when there was

room for the pot it was swung on the pole into its hot berth and with a few well-directed sweeps of the pole it was completely covered with the hot coals and the whole covered with ashes.

The beans were "put to bed," as Mr. Reeves graphically expressed it, and all that remained was to give them the needful hours that the long night would afford and the dish would be ready.

Then the boys left the "bean-hole" and went inside with their friend, who told them many delightful stories of his own camping days until it was time to think of going to bed.

"What are you boys planning to do to-morrow?" asked their guest, just as they were ready to say good-night. "Have you anything in mind?"

"Nothing special," said Jimmie, "we'd probably just browse around here all day."

“Well, then, what do you say to a tramp to-morrow—a good one of about twelve miles? Do you think you could do it?”

“Yes, sir, I’m sure we could,” said Philip.

“Very well, then, we’ll have a good breakfast to-morrow, that is if our beans turn out all right, and afterward we’ll start for Hiram’s Cave—you never heard of it, did you?”

The boys admitted that they never had, whereupon their guest laughed softly and promised them a bit of a surprise.

Then the boys said “good-night” to their guest, who was to occupy the cottage, and they sought their bunks in the tent.

CHAPTER XV

FOUR BOYS AFOOT

NEEDLESS to say our little campers slept well that Friday night. It was true that toward morning Rand awoke feeling a bit chilly and pulled on an extra blanket, but after that he fell into a deep sleep and never opened his eyes until something hit him on the nose, and he awoke to see the three boys standing near the door of the tent making a target of his face with clothes, pillows, and anything near at hand.

“Here you fellows, stop it!” cried Rand, rubbing his eyes and trying to dodge the missiles.

“Get out of that bunk, you lazybones!” teased Philip, making a blanket into a ball, to let fly at Rand’s head. “Have you forgotten those beans, and our trip to Hiram’s Cave this morning?”

With this parting shot the three wide-awake ones went out of the tent, while Rand jumped out of bed and began to dress in a hurry.

Then he, too, ran out to find Mr. Reeves and the boys standing near the “bean-hole.”

The bale of the pot stuck bravely up out of a blackened mass of dead and lifeless coals, but no one would have guessed that they were dead and lifeless a short time later when all hands sat down to breakfast and the beans were as hot as could be and of a certain delicious flavor that comes only from the real “bean-hole.”

When breakfast was over and the dishes cleared away, hens and pigeons cared for and

camp chores done, the boys were ready for their long tramp.

“Trouble” was on hand with a most expectant expression on his intelligent face, and when Mr. Reeves observed “as we are going to the other side of the lake we’ll cut off a little by sailing in the *Marjorie*” made a dash for the float and was aboard before they had taken a dozen steps.

The boys were pleased at the idea of a short sail in the house-boat. Indeed, they never missed an opportunity to travel by way of the staunch little *Marjorie*, so they all went aboard and made good progress to the other side, where they had constructed sometime previous a sort of landing-place and to which they now secured the house-boat.

Then they took the lake road for about a mile, after which they cut into the North woods and tramped without stopping for several miles more.

“It’s a perfect day for the woods,” said Mr. Reeves. “‘One of those charmed days when the genius of God doth flow,’” he quoted.

Their friend proved to be a delightful companion and entered into every suggestion with boyish zest. He had, besides, a store of knowledge from which he drew, giving the boys many useful bits of information about the country through which they were passing—the flowers and plants and the habits of some of the small wild animals. He was particularly interested in the birds and led the boys to count the different species they met in their walk.

It was while on this subject that our boys told him all about the S. F. B.

“Good!” he cried, when Rand explained that the S. F. B. was a society for the feeding of our birds in the bleak winter months—a practical organization that had grown and

spread since it was first started, so that now nearly all the towns of the State were represented.

“It is one of the best things I’ve heard of to help save our birds,” said Mr. Reeves.

“It is really a sad fact,” he went on, “that there are not adequate laws for their protection, and this protection, as our State ornithologist says pointedly, will always be ineffective if it is held back until the need for it is generally recognized. It should become operative before it becomes necessary to save a bird from extermination. Its laws should not be enacted merely with the purpose of maintaining the present number of birds. Its province should be to increase their numbers before they are in any danger of extinction and legislation with this end in view is needed now.”

“I never knew there was any danger of extinction,” said Rand.

“I am sorry to say there is, and more than that several species of birds; the most rapacious feeders upon insects, have become extinct in Massachusetts, and other species are rapidly disappearing. When you boys have a voice in legislation don’t forget our birds.”

At this point a fat squirrel ran across their path and darted up a tree. They watched him as he reached the end of a slender twig and with a spring was into another tree and still another.

“Interesting little creatures,” observed their guide.

“I’d like to know if they have memory—very good memories, I mean,” remarked Philip.

“Well now, that’s quite a question,” laughed the man. “Do you think a squirrel has a good memory, Philip?”

“Yes, I think so, and I’ll tell you why. There’s a big chestnut tree in our back-yard

and I have often watched a squirrel in the autumn, pick up a nut, run along the ground with it until he reached a good place, then with his front feet dig a little hole, drop the nut in, cover it over, and scamper away.

“Perhaps he’d hide several nuts in different places, and weeks later I have seen that squirrel go right to the spot and dig up a nut.”

“But that was done by scent,” said Jimmie, “and of course squirrels must know their own tracks.”

“But when there’s several inches of snow on the ground, I’ve seen him go right to the spot and get his nut. Now there weren’t any tracks and there wasn’t much scent, if any, through all that snow. I think he remembered where he buried his nut every time.”

“Well, Philip, I certainly agree with you that animals have memory; at the same time I do not think it was memory that helped

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our squirrel find his nut under the snow, and if you went to one of those holes you'd find that the nut was not buried deeply, in fact it was hardly more than covered, but I'm glad you have observed so well, and now there's something to study about. Learn all you can about your little neighbors. They will be twice as interesting to watch then."

The party had now reached a small stream and followed its winding course for nearly a mile.

It was very narrow and along its banks grew the blue pickerel-weed and masses of ferns that were mirrored in the water. The woods all about were very dense. Indeed the place seemed never to have been traversed by man. There are many such lovely places hidden away in our own State where all is beauty and silence, and the boys, young as they were, felt the spell of it and listened with mute appreciation when Emerson's

beautiful lines fell from the lips of their guide:

“‘A secret nook in a pleasant land
Whose grooves the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green the livelong day
Echo the blackbird’s roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.’”

After another stretch they reached the open country and kept on for a mile or two, when they rested in a grove of pine trees and had lunch.

Then they took up the thread of travel again and followed their leader wherever he went.

Suddenly Mr. Reeves stopped and looked about.

“It is quite a number of years since I took this trip and I want to get my bearings, as it were.

“I have them now,” he went on with a smile, and walked rapidly until they reached

a hollow in the woods that led to a rocky ravine.

A little way up this ravine they came to a great rock behind which was a small natural cave.

“And this is Hiram’s Cave,” said Mr. Reeves; “named in honor of my brother who thought he discovered it one morning many years ago, when as boys we used to come here and knew this region very well.”

“See!” cried Philip, whose quick eye had discerned a rude “H” cut in the rock.

“You will find other names, too, if you look about,” observed their friend. “Wait!” he cried, as a sudden happy recollection of his boyhood days flashed over him, and taking his pocket knife he began to scrape away the earth at the entrance to the cave, the boys watching him intently.

At last the knife scraped a stone which after some difficulty was removed, and under

it a small tin box was dug out by Philip, who opened it eagerly.

“I hardly expected to find that,” said the man, “and yet why shouldn’t I? I helped put it there.”

“Is there anything in it?” asked the boys in one breath.

“Open it and see for yourselves,” he replied with a chuckle.

Then Philip opened the box and found inside a paper folded.

This was spread out to his astonished mates, who read (in large red ink letters),—

“Stranger Beware!

“This is Hiram’s Cave! The abode of the Jolly Five! Let no one enter here who has not been initiated into the secrets of this band. By order of the Jolly Five.”

“Wait a minute,” interrupted the man, “let me see if I remember the order of those names,” and passing a hand over his fore-

head reminisciently he said, "the first name signed on that paper is Hiram Reeves—isn't it?"

"Yes, that is right," said Rand, "and then comes—"

"Don't tell me, Rand,—then comes Billy Barker, Tom Bucknam, Squeal McCall, Jack Reeves."

"You remember them, every one," said Philip, while the boys grinned joyously over the "find."

The glimpse into the past had brought up a flood of happy memories to the man. To the boys it proved that their genial friend had once been a happy boy like themselves, and best of all he had not forgotten how it felt to be a boy.

"I'd like to take that box home with me," said Philip, "to remember Hiram's Cave," and he began to read the inscription over again.

"You may have it and welcome," said the grown-up "Jack" Reeves, "and sometime I'll tell you all about the doings of the Jolly Five."

"I know you had good times," said Lucci.

"Yes, we did, Lucci—bully times!"

"Did you have one particular chum that you liked better than all the others?" asked Rand.

"The second on that list," was the answer.

"Billy Barker?" said Rand, studying the paper for a moment; "tell us about him. Was he in for a good time?"

Mr. Reeves laughed softly. "It would take too long to tell about Billy. I'll write a book of him for you some fine day.

"Billy was a live boy, from his nine toes, the tenth had been shot off one Fourth of July to the two-inch bald spot on the top of his head. This was the result of one of his experiments with some acid.

“He had also had an encounter with some cannon crackers and had come out second-best and minus eye-brows and lashes, but for all that he was ready to try it again. Billy Barker could extract more mishaps out of the square inch than any other mortal I ever met; and now, boys, we must make tracks for home.”

“Don’t forget your promise, Mr. Reeves,” said Lucci, “I want to read about Billy Barker some day.”

Mr. Reeves declared that he would not forget.

CHAPTER XVI

CRUEL SPORT

THE week following was rather quiet for our boys. After school Jimmie was busy making a birch rocker for Mr. Reeves.

It was a simple affair, but very pretty and rustic-looking, and the tenant of the new house on North Road was very much pleased with it.

It was now nearing the second week in October and the country around Sunnyview, in its Autumn dress, was very lovely.

At this time Lucci was busy with his water colors and almost every spare minute found him "doing" a bit of the woods near the

lake, that was already a brilliant mass of color.

When Friday afternoon came there was the usual happy reunion then a rush for the house-boat. Trouble, always on hand, was the first to jump aboard. Indeed he seemed to prefer the *Marjorie* to any other spot at the Camp.

The boys cruised about the lake until it was time to go ashore and when they landed, Rand and Lucci began to prepare supper, while Jimmie and Philip started to feed the hens and pigeons.

It was while thus engaged that our hero noticed one of his pigeons walking lame; and upon close examination discovered that the pigeon had been wounded in the wing, and was bleeding and hardly able to stand.

“He’s been shot,” cried Philip, “you can see the wound!”

“Why! so he has—who could have done

such a mean thing!" exclaimed Jimmie, whose indignation knew no bounds at this discovery.

"It would have been better to kill it outright," said Rand, who with Lucci had been called to see the wounded pigeon. "That poor thing is suffering intense pain from that wound."

"I wish I knew who did it," said Jimmie, with tightened lips.

"I know one thing," said Lucci, "and that is Shad Wilber has a new air rifle—I saw him in the woods early this morning trying to shoot squirrels."

"I'll go and see Shad Wilber," declared Jimmie, his face flushed with anger, "but first I'll put that poor pigeon out of pain."

When the act of mercy was performed the boys went into the cottage to have supper. But the shooting of one of his pets did not tend to put Jimmie in a very happy frame of

mind, and supper that night was not the pleasant occasion it usually was at camp.

Jimmie Suter was very quiet, and when the meal was finished he took his cap and started with Rand on the tandem for Shad Wilber's house.

When they reached it they met Shad's father, Jackson Wilber. He had evidently just walked from the train and he looked at the boys inquiringly.

"I'd like to speak to Shad, if you please," said Jimmie, shortly, standing outside the door of the cottage.

"It's supper time now," said the man with some hesitation. "What do you want to see him for?"

"I want to ask him about one of my pigeons," began Jimmie, but just at this point one of the children, hearing the voices, opened the door wide and stood there looking out.

The interior of the room was in full view of the boys who saw Shad Wilber, a new air rifle in hand, standing near the stove, surrounded by the younger children.

“Come out here, Shad,” called his father, and then said with a faint smile, “now you two can settle it between you.” He went inside, slamming the door behind him, while Shad stood before the boys, looking anything but comfortable.

Shad Wilber stood in awe of Jimmie Suter. There was no mistaking that fact. He had done some pretty mean things in the past and there was no knowing (so he argued to himself) what form Jimmie’s revenge might take.

Perhaps this was why he changed color and trembled as Jimmie frowned at him.

“Where’d you get that air rifle?” asked Jimmie, who had not meant to ask that question at all.

“I—I—d’ know as that’s any o’ your affair,” returned Shad, sulkily. “My father bought it for me, if you want to know.”

“Well, I don’t want to know,” said Jimmie. “I don’t care where you got it, but you were up in the woods near our camp shooting squirrels this morning, weren’t you?”

“S’posin’ I was.”

“And you shot one of my pigeons, didn’t you? If you’d shot it dead it wouldn’t have been so mean, but you wounded it and it’s been going around all day with a hole under its wing. You’re a nice one, aren’t you?” added Jimmie, scornfully.

“I never,” protested Shad, “but this afternoon, while I was at school, Ikey took my rifle and went up there and I bet he did it.”

Shad opened the door and called out the small boy in question, who after a thorough cross-examination, as it were, by our hero,

admitted that he and another urchin tried to shoot some pigeons.

“We—we didn’t know they were *your* pigeons,” whimpered Ikey.

“I don’t blame Ikey,” said Jimmie, turning to Shad, “you had no business to leave that air rifle where a child could get it—he was just as likely to shoot his companion as one of my pigeons—well, I don’t want it to happen again,” said Jimmie, and turning on his heel, he walked away.

“Well,” observed Rand, a moment later when they had mounted the tandem and were flying home, “Shad wasn’t the guilty one this time, was he?”

“I’m not so sure of that,” replied Jimmie, smarting under the loss of his pet. “It wouldn’t be beyond Shad’s meanness to send Ikey up there to shoot at them; he wouldn’t dare go himself.”

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A moment later our hero's better nature asserted itself and he added:

"I ought not to say that, but then, you see, I know Shad Wilber."

"Do you suppose his father knows he acts so? What does his father do, anyway—what's his business?" asked Rand all in a breath.

"I don't know," replied Jimmie, "he's something in the city;" and just at this point the light in Ben's cottage could be seen and the subject was dropped, the boys riding hard until they reached the camp.

CHAPTER XVII

M. H. D., COLLECTOR

JIMMIE and Philip put away the tandem and were just going to enter the cottage when the sound of laughter and a girl's voice held their attention, and they stood for a second.

Then Rand knocked gently and on opening the door our boys found themselves face to face with the pretty girl who had been all over their camp in the summer; that day her father's automobile broke down in the woods.

"This is my second automobile adventure," said the stranger, lightly, when greetings had been exchanged.

Then Rand and Jimmie seated themselves with Philip and Lucci and their guest, and

they watched her bright face as she rested a slim hand on Ben's little table and told them how it happened.

“We saw the light in the window and I asked father to let me run over and pay you a short visit while he went on to the village to get something for his machinery, and then I just jumped out before he could refuse and here I am! Oh, he came, too, just to make sure that it was you boys and not a camp of gypsies that I'd settled upon; and he's coming back in five minutes he said. O dear! it's such a little bit of time to say all I want to tell. And you're still camping! Isn't it jolly! Tell me all about the fun you have—won't you, please?”

“There really isn't very much to tell,” said Rand. “We've done a few things, of course, and have good times, but we only meet here every Friday after school now, you know.”

“Do you write it all down—do you keep a diary?” asked the girl.

A smile broke over the faces of the four lads as Philip answered, “No, we don’t. I think girls like to keep diaries better than boys, don’t you think so?”

“Perhaps they do—but I don’t. I keep something ever so much nicer,” said their visitor with a merry smile.

“May we ask what that is?” spoke up Jimmie.

“Oh, yes! I’ll tell you, boys, all about it. In the first place I’m a collector—”

“Collector!” exclaimed her hearers almost in one breath.

“What do you collect?” asked Rand. The girl laughed softly.

“I’ll tell you. I collect adventures.”

“Adventures—that’s queer,” said Philip.

The boys looked puzzled but the girl hastened to add—

“Instead of keeping a diary with every little fiddle-faddle written down, I keep an account of the happenings that are really worth while. Listen, and I’ll read a short list of what I have collected, it isn’t very much yet—but it’s growing all the time, you know.”

She drew from inside her dress a note book, and opening it read as follows:—

“1. A visit to the Old Lady of Grasshopper Lane.

“2. An adventure in the Circus.

“3. My First Automobile Adventure.

“4. A Gypsy Adventuress.

“5. A Little Business Adventure.

“There are just a few other teeny-weeny adventures,” she added, looking up from her book at the four eager faces.

“The names sound good,” said Rand, “and arouse one’s curiosity. Couldn’t you tell us a little about some of them?”

“Yes indeed! if you would like to hear.”

“That first one,” observed Philip. ‘A Visit to the Old Lady of Grasshopper Lane.’ That sounds like a fairy story.”

“Oh! but she isn’t the least bit of a fairy,” laughed the girl. “She is a very real old Scotch lady I met last summer, when I was stopping at a little fishing town on the coast. *She* is a collector, too—only she collects pitchers. She has over two hundred pitchers and each one hangs on a tiny hook in a little room of her cottage. She has a pitcher that came from Hindoostan, and a pitcher made by an Alaskan Indian, and another that was found near a Chinese idol. Indeed, I think there are only a few countries on the globe that are not represented in her collection. How did she get them all? Well, that’s a story in itself and it’s very interesting, too, but it would take too long to tell it now. But

she had a son who was a sailor, and in the beginning, when she first started, you know, he brought her some of them.

“Afterwards this son died while performing an act of great courage, and the captain of his ship has never forgotten that dear old lady’s collection. He has brought her many quaint ones and has asked friends to send them. But all this isn’t my adventure, you know, and so I must tell you that at once.

“One afternoon I called on the Old Lady of Grasshopper Lane and she made me a cup of tea, as is her custom, and when I had finished I turned the cup upside down in my saucer, and around three times, and wished. Then she read the tea-cup. You don’t know what that means, do you, because you’re boys? It means that she told my fortune. I won’t tell you what it was because I don’t believe you’d be interested.”

“Oh! yes we would!” said Rand. “How

in the world could she see any fortune in a tea cup?"

"Well, that's just it. How could she? But she did," said the girl, with a merry laugh, "and she told me in very broad Scotch accents the nicest fortune you ever heard. I was going to cross water and I was going to be a rich lassie—there was a bird flying over my head with news, and there was a closed bargain, and she ended it all by saying—'I'm afeard but there's a sad *cat-as-trofe* vera near, it looks as if there'd be *devilopemints* richt soon.' She had hardly said the word when the door was flung open and a little wild-eyed peddler-man, with an immense tray on which were plaster images of cats, dogs and everything, burst into the room.

"'Oh, sava me!' he cried, and in his excitement ran past us into the very room where the precious collection of pitchers adorned the walls.

“‘Ma pitchers!’ cried the indignant old lady, jumping to her feet and running in there after him. In a very few words she ordered him away from her precious collection.

“‘What ever ails ye mon—ha’ ye gone daft?’ she asked him, when trembling with fear he stammered something in a foreign language of which neither of us understood a word. He tried hard to explain, pointing all the time to his red cap.

“‘Suddenly there was a shout outside and we ran to the door to see a neighbor leading along a harmless-looking black cow, while a small crowd of villagers stood by laughing, as if it were the funniest thing in the world.

“‘Then we learned that the black cow, which had never behaved so before in all her short life, had chased the peddler-man, who thought it was a bull, and he had taken refuge in the old lady’s cottage.

“Then we all laughed. Even the peddler smiled as he took his leave with his great tray of images. And then my dear Old Lady of Grasshopper Lane must needs run back to her little room to see if her pitchers were all safe. I was at her heels and when we opened the door the first thing we saw was a cat. A funny plaster cat, that rested on the mantel and bobbed his head forward and backward all the time.

“I laughed harder than ever but the old lady did not laugh at all. She was very much vexed at the sight of it.

“‘Take it awa’, there’s a guid lass—rin quick an’ gie it to him, he’s lost it.’

“Well, I took the cat and ran out of the cottage and after the peddler as fast as I could, and when, after a breathless race I caught up to him, he refused absolutely to take back the cat, that was bobbing back and forth harder than ever.

“Oh! I can never tell you how I laughed. I simply could not contain myself, but he made me understand, in broken English with the wildest gestures, that the cat was a gift for the old lady to put in the room with her pitchers.

“Then I went back to the cottage in Grasshopper Lane and put the cat on the table, and when the old lady saw it she threw up her hands; but when I explained that it was a gift, to be put along with the pitchers, her indignation knew no bounds.

“After a while, however, she cooled down and casting a look of scorn on the poor plaster cat that all this time was nodding as much as to say, ‘I told you so,’ she said:

“‘Na doot he meant weel—but to put thet wi ma pitchers! never, never! take it oot o’ me sight—it’s na canny.’ And I have the plaster cat to this day!

“It doesn’t seem so funny to tell it,”

laughed the narrator, "but it was the funniest thing that ever happened to me, I think."

"That was jolly," cried Rand, while the other boys laughed merrily at the girl's story. "That was an adventure worth recording."

"The second one on my list isn't so much of an adventure, I suppose," said the girl.

"It happened this way: I wanted to go to the circus and I asked father to take me and he said he'd think about it, and I asked mother and she made some excuse. Then I asked my brother Bob and he declared that he couldn't possibly spare the time—pleaded hard lessons, work at college, and all that sort of thing. Then I coaxed my Aunt Maria and she said 'The idea!' So then I stopped talking about it altogether and they all thought I'd forgotten about it, but I hadn't and when Uncle John came I whispered to him that I wanted to go very, very much.

“Well, he’s the kindest uncle in the world and he always wants to do just what I want to do,—so we planned to run away together on a certain day and go to the circus, and we did and what do you suppose happened!

“Why! there were father and mother feeding peanuts to the wild animals—and then we sat just behind Brother Bob with a young lady, but best of all we bumped right into Aunt Maria gazing at the wild man in his cage. Now, wasn’t that good!”

The little story-teller threw back her head and laughed so joyously that the boys found themselves laughing, too.

“Tell us the rest of the collection, won’t you please?” said Rand.

“Well, to continue, you all know about my first automobile adventure, because you were in it.”

“Do you mean that day last summer, when

the machine broke down over in the woods?" asked Jimmie.

"That's the day," declared Marjorie, with a girlish nod. "Wasn't it fun? I'll never forget the sail in that boat-house."

"Oh! you mean in the house-boat, the *Marjorie*," observed Rand.

"The *what*?" exclaimed the girl with shining eyes.

"Why! the *Marjorie*. Oh! I had forgotten," said Rand; "you didn't know—well, you see we named our house-boat after you."

"You did? Wasn't that sweet of you!" and Marjorie beamed with pride and pleasure at this piece of news.

"But how did you know my name *was* Marjorie?"

"We heard your father call you," said Philip.

"And you remembered! How clever!"

and the girl laughed her deliciously girlish laugh again.

“By the way, you’ve never told us your other name,” said Rand. ,

“‘Cause you never asked me—but I’ll tell you now, and please don’t forget it; and I really ought to know your names, too, so that I can put everything in the adventure. My name is Marjorie Helen Dane. Now what’s yours?”

Rand gave the names and even spelled them, while Marjorie wrote them in her little note-book.

Suddenly Lucci, who had been a silent witness of all these proceedings, drew a small box from his pocket and held up a pin before their guest.

“Why, that is my pin,” said the girl.

“I thought so,” said Lucci, “ever since you told us your name.”

“I knew I lost it during vacation, but was

not sure when, and I never expected to see it again. Now I have something more to add to that adventure, and thank you very much.”

Then Lucci explained how he had found the pin when vacation days were past, and Marjorie put the pin in her pocket.

“Now I must hurry with my collection,” she went on, “or papa will be back before I’m half through. Let’s see—the next is ‘A Gypsy Adventuress.’ I don’t believe you’ll care for that one.”

“Oh yes! tell us everything, please,” said her hearers.

“Well, there really isn’t very much to that and yet it was fun.

“One day I dressed up just like a gypsy girl that I’d seen once. I stained my face and put on a wig and beads and ribbons, and every sort of gewgaws.

“Then I went out on purpose to meet my brother Bob. I knew where he was busy in

a bit of woods near our house, and I talked with him and took his hand insisting on telling his fortune, and he crossed my palm with a piece of silver—he said all he had was a quarter and oh! the fun I had! and Bob never knew until that evening at dinner. I began to tease him and the whole house just roared at how easily Bob was taken in by the Gypsy Adventuress.”

The boys were delighted with the pranks of this happy girl and entered into the spirit of her mischief-making with boyish zest. She had just started to close the little book of adventures when Jimmie said, quickly, “There was one more—you didn’t tell us about that ‘Little Business Adventure.’ ”

“Do you know what that was?” asked Marjorie, as if Jimmie knew all about her affairs. “That was selling boiled chestnuts at the skating carnival on Bear Lake last winter. A number of girls did it and we

raised enough money to give an outing to forty poor children last summer.

“Of course father helped me a little on that, but really we earned quite a sum. Now that is all and what do you think of my book of adventures?”

“It’s good,” said Rand. “I think it is a splendid idea. I believe I’ll start one, too—what do you say, boys?”

“I’d like to,” said Philip and Lucci, but Jimmie looked puzzled.

“What good is it—what are you going to do with it?” he asked.

Rand gave him a slap on the back and smiled at Marjorie.

“That’s just like Jimmie; if it isn’t something that you can fit in somewhere to make some old thing, he hasn’t any use for it.”

Marjorie laughed softly and pointing a gloved finger at the boy she said in mock earnestness—

“Oh! you mean thing, to say that my book of adventure isn’t any good, I never would have thought it of you, Jimmie, never!”

“But I didn’t mean that it wasn’t good,” protested Jimmie, blushing to the roots of his hair. “I only meant—”

“Now you can’t get out of it,” laughed Marjorie, and just at this point there was a shrill whistle.

“That’s papa—I must be off,” and waving her hand to them she hurried out of the little cottage and was gone almost before they knew it.

“Say fellows! isn’t Marjorie fine!” exclaimed Rand.

“She’s the nicest girl I ever met,” replied Philip.

“And she’s got just the kind of hair I’d like to paint,” declared Lucci.

“Too bad she isn’t a boy, ’though,” observed Jimmie Suter.

CHAPTER XVIII

JIMMIE'S FIRST

OF course it was not Jimmie's first letter, you understand, but it was the first that he had ever received from a girl of his own age, and so it was doubly interesting.

He had found it at the post-office the Monday following Marjorie's visit, and he glanced curiously at the fine envelope sealed with a real stamped seal, and noted the round, plain handwriting, and then he had opened it and his face beamed as he read the following delightful invitation:—

“MY DEAR JIMMIE:

“Here is a riddle. Why should automobiles rest a great deal? Because they are

'tired' all the time. I made that up—papa said he never would have known it if I did not tell him. I wonder if that is sarcasm.

"Well, automobiles must get tired of the same people all the time and I think a change is good for everything, even automobiles. Our auto has had all the family and the family's friends, and the family's friends' friends, and so I asked papa to break the monotony, as it were, for that poor old auto, and let it take around some live boys.

"He agreed, but said, seeing they were live boys, he could only take two at a sitting.

"Now I would like very much to have two of my friends at Pigeon Camp be ready next Saturday morning at ten, A. M., when we shall call to take them on a trip through a part of our prettiest country.

"Cordially yours,

"MARJORIE H. DANE."

At first Jimmie was delighted at this invitation until, of a sudden, it flashed into his head that only two could go and Marjorie had not said which two.

Here was a quandary:

He was thinking very hard about it when Lucci came along and our hero told him all about it.

"I have never yet been in one of those big automobiles!" exclaimed Lucci with so expectant and radiant a smile that the other boy then and there decided that Lucci must have the pleasure of the trip.

"You must go, you and Philip. I have had a few trips with Rand in his father's automobile, but you and Philip have not, so you shall take this one."

"Thanks, Jimmie, I shall look forward all this week to that trip."

If there were the least twinge of disap-

pointment that he was not going to be in the pleasant company of their bright little friend, Jimmie Suter did not reveal it, but he wrote a letter to Rand that night telling all about it. In fact he enclosed Marjorie's letter and the next day received a hurried note from his friend in the city.

"It is just like your bump of generosity," so the note ran, "to let the others enjoy the sport, but all the same Marjorie means you because she wrote to you.

"I think she wanted you and me but we'll let Phil and Lucci go *this* time, but the next will be *ours*.

"As you will be alone at Camp on Saturday, why not pay me a visit here in Boston for a change?

"I want you to start early; let me know the train you will take and I'll be at the station to meet you. We'll look around and see

some city sights. Awaiting your reply which must be 'yes,' I remain,

“Your friend,

“RAND.”

Then Jimmie asked permission of his mother to spend the day with Rand and having received it, wrote the welcome word and made his plans for a Saturday in the city.

CHAPTER XIX

“SOMETHING IN THE CITY”

It had been a great day in the city for our friend Jimmie Suter. Rand had taken him to many places of interest after which they had watched a baseball match on the Common and seen the finish of a football game.

Some time later Jimmie realized that the time was approaching the hour for his train home, so he and Rand started to walk leisurely toward the big station.

The streets were crowded and the boys were jostled hither and thither at some of the busy corners, but Jimmie enjoyed every minute. He liked to watch the great throngs of people as they moved along the gay promenade, the busy Saturday shopper with a small

load of bundles, the groups of people, young and old, bound for some place of amusement, and in and out the alert little newsboys calling their papers.

Jimmie was much interested in the men who sold mechanical toys on the street, and stood for several moments watching a toy automobile spin around in a circle. Indeed he was so fascinated with it that he bought one for Tod.

Then they walked on their way but he stood every now and then to see something interesting and the bootblacks, the peanut vendors, and all the rest held his attention. Jimmie, as we know, was a country boy and a visit to the city was a rare treat.

Rand enjoyed his friend's interest in everything about him and so it was not strange that he should pull Jimmie's arm suddenly as the two approached the corner of a narrow street at which a sorry-looking

creature was holding forth a tin cup, while in front of him attached by a small chain around his neck, hung a tray on which were a few articles for sale, such as pencils, pins, tape, etc.

Jimmie looked at the poor fellow, dressed as he was in an old faded blue coat with a sort of cape, and he noticed that of all the people who dropped money into the dipper no one took any of the small wares in return, but seemed to regard him as a beggar.

He was so unmistakably an object of charity that our hero fumbled in his pocket for a few pennies to help, and just as he was about to drop them in the tin cup the man raised his eyes and met those of Jimmie Suter.

It was only for the briefest moment, but Jimmie gave a quick start, the man lowered his eyes, and our hero hurried on, almost pulling Rand Cotter after him.

Before he had taken many steps, however,

he stood where he had a good view of the fellow with the tray, and watched him.

"Come along," urged Rand, but Jimmie stood there gazing as if spell-bound at the man with the tin cup.

"It can't be," muttered Jimmie, "it never could be."

"Never could be what?" asked Rand, puzzled by his friend's manner.

"What in the world are you staring at that beggar for, Jimmie?"

Just at this point the crowd jostled Jimmie off the sidewalk, but he quickly regained his footing and catching Rand by the arm said, in a low voice:

"Look Rand! Look at him well!"

"Yes, I'm looking, but I don't see anything remarkable about him."

"Does he look like anyone you ever saw?" whispered Jimmie, with suppressed excitement.

“No, he doesn’t. What is there about him that’s so mystifying?”

“Didn’t you ever see *those clothes before?*” asked Jimmie.

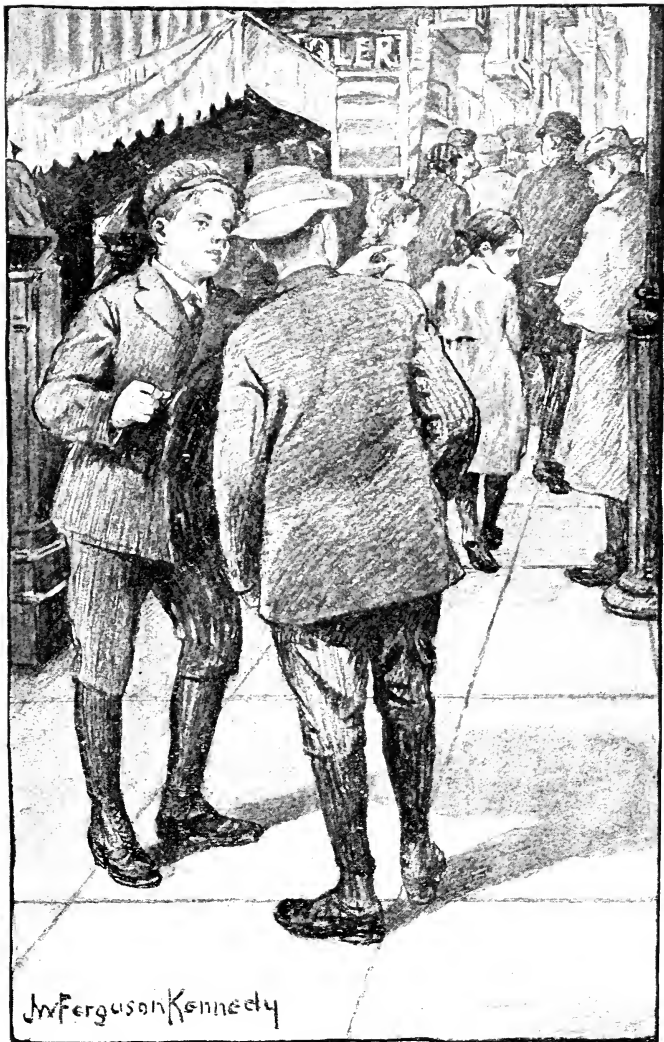
Rand noted for the first time the faded blue coat and the gray slouch hat, and all at once he gave a low whistle.

“Phew! I know now. Why, those are the very clothes we—”

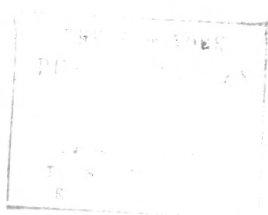
“Hush!” interrupted Jimmie, “he just glanced over this way—he’s looking now—don’t turn around; he’s got his eye on us. He’s moving. He’s walking away.”

“Say, Jimmie, let’s follow him,” interrupted Rand; “let’s see where he goes,” and so saying the boys walked slowly after the retreating figure of the man in the old clothes, keeping well behind so as not to arouse his suspicion should he turn suddenly.

“Well, if that doesn’t beat all!” exclaimed



"DIDN'T YOU EVER SEE *THOSE CLOTHES BEFORE?*" ASKED
JIMMIE. — *Page 194.*



Rand. "Who would have suspected such a thing?"

"We are not dead sure yet that it is the person we have in mind," said Jimmie, "but I'm going to find out."

The boys forgot all about the train as they hurried along, and almost lost sight of the object of their search at a crowded crossing. They found him again, however, and never took their eyes from the faded blue coat until the wearer of it turned suddenly into a side street, and then into another and still another.

This street was filled with small shops and cheap lodging-houses, and the boys, following in the footsteps of the man, saw him stop suddenly at what seemed to be a big tenement house.

They had just time to dart into a doorway when the man turned, and after a quick look

up and down the street he opened the door and went inside.

“Now, what in the world did he go in there for?” said Rand. “I’m afraid we’ve lost him.”

“Wait a while,” replied Jimmie; “if it’s the man we think it is, he’s going home sometime to-night and I think he’ll come out of that house very soon.”

“There might be another way out,” observed Rand, “and in that event we’d miss him.”

“I never thought of that, Rand, let’s walk past the house and see what it looks like, anyway.”

Following this suggestion the boys started to walk past the house, but they had hardly reached the door when it opened and, Jackson Wilber, dressed in an ordinary suit of clothes, stepped out.

He gave a perceptible start at the sight of

the two boys, then recovering himself, as it were, glared at them.

"Well, are you satisfied with your spyin'?"

The boys were silent, not knowing what to say, and thoroughly abashed at the man's words. They almost wished that they had not allowed their curiosity to lead them there as it did.

"What are you spyin' on me for, you two? I never did you any harm, did I, Suter?"

"We didn't mean any harm to you, sir," blurted Jimmie. "We knew—that is we thought we knew those clothes you wore—we'd seen them in the haunted house on the North Road and we followed you just to see."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked the man sullenly. "It ain't a crime to put on some old clothes and sell useful things to try an' make an honest penny, is it? You better mind your own business, or you'll

get into trouble," and frowning at his hearers he turned on his heel and walked rapidly away.

Jimmie and Rand looked sheepishly at each other. It must be confessed that they felt very uncomfortable at the part they had played in the scene just enacted.

Then they started away in an opposite direction from that taken by the man, and for a moment neither spoke.

After a pause, Rand almost stood still, and exclaimed:

"Well, of all the cheeky rascals I ever heard of, he is the coolest."

"Come on," said Jimmie, "don't stand, I'm ashamed of the whole business."

"If it's honest," persisted Rand, "why does he disguise himself in those old ragged clothes?"

"That is just it," returned Jimmie, warmly; "why doesn't he stand there and sell his

goods, no matter how small they are, like an honest man? It's just to create pity and get money out of people—it's not honest—it's terribly mean, and I wish I'd told him so.”

Suddenly the boy grew very quiet and a deep blush spread over his honest face.

“Wouldn't you feel ashamed if *your* father did a thing like that? Say Rand, we must never speak of this to a living soul.”

Then our boys hurried on their way to the Station and were just in time for the train for Sunnyview.

No word was spoken for a long time as they sped homeward, but each was going over in his mind the strange discovery they had made.

It was Jackson Wilber who had been the “ghost” of the old house on the North Road. It was he who had secreted the old clothes there and the purpose was now evident.

Jimmie could not help thinking about it.

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In the midst of his thoughts the door of the car was opened and the very man that was uppermost in them appeared and stood for a moment looking over the car. Then he made straight for the boys and turning over the vacant seat in front so that he could face them, Jackson Wilber dropped into it without a word.

Then bending toward them he said, in a low voice:

“Look here, boys, I never would have done this thing if I hadn’t been driven to it. I tried to get work, but I could not. I’ve tried everything, but I couldn’t make it pay. Then my wife and children got sick and I was desperate—I’ve only been doing it a short time and I’m going to quit when I can get some work to do, but if you go and tell this it will ruin me with the folks out home.”

“We’re not going to tell,” said Jimmie, in a low voice, touched by the man’s story.

“At first I used to come out here in the cars,” the man went on, “and change the old clothes in the haunted house before I went home, but I discovered that some one had got into the house and had seen the old clothes I wore and I was afraid I’d be found out, so I thought of another plan. I hired a room, a mere closet in that lodging-house you saw. I got it for almost nothing as I never use it after nightfall. Well, boys, it’s hard luck when a man is driven to such a deed and I’m ruined if you expose me.”

“We shan’t tell,” said Rand, “we’re very sorry for you.”

“I—I never thought to come to this,” muttered the man, “but I’m going to quit as soon as I can. There’s nothing ahead of me yet, and I’ve lots of trouble at home—you see how it is, Jimmie?”

“Yes, I think I know what you mean. It isn’t really an honest thing to do and we’re

glad you're going to quit, but the matter is safe, as far as we are concerned."

"Thank you, Jimmie, thank you both. You're good boys and I knew I could depend upon you. You're fine fellows! You're—" but Jimmie cut this effusion short by an impatient gesture that escaped almost unconsciously. He could not sit there and listen to the fawning flattery of this man for whom, in spite of his sad story, Jimmie had a feeling of contempt.

Everybody looked relieved when some time later the train began to slacken its speed and then stopped at the little station of Sunnyview.

"You'll not forget your promise—you said you wouldn't speak of this," whispered Jackson Wilber, as he walked behind the boys out of the car.

"We keep our word," replied Jimmie.

CHAPTER XX

A QUIET EVENING AT CAMP

RAND and Jimmie, as they hurried on their way to the Camp that night, could talk of nothing but the strange discovery they had made in regard to Shad Wilber's father.

"I can't help pitying the man," said Jimmie; "he must have been in terrible straits to have done such a thing in the first place."

"And he seems to feel his humiliating position keenly enough," returned Rand; "it certainly is a contemptible way to earn one's living."

"I wish he could find some honest work," observed our hero. "Do you suppose your father could do anything for him, Rand?"

"That thought just came to me, Jimmie.

I mean to tell my father all about it and ask him if there is anything he could suggest for the man to do."

"But we gave our word that we would not tell," said Jimmie. "I wonder if that means our fathers?"

"Of course not," replied Rand. "I tell my father everything."

"So do I," said Jimmie. "I wouldn't have a secret like that and not tell him and I know father will never tell a soul."

The boys now came within sight of the little cottage and Jimmie began to sing—"There's a light in the window." The next moment the door was thrown wide open and the inmates, Philip and Lucci, stood smiling on the threshold waiting to welcome them.

"Oh! but you fellows missed it to-day!" exclaimed Philip, when the two boys who had spent the day in the city seated themselves, the better to admire a great bunch of leaves,

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all crimson and brown and gold, gathered in the very heart of an Autumn woods.

"You missed it," said Lucci.

"Did we, though," replied Jimmie. "I don't feel that I have missed anything to-day—do you Rand?"

"Not I. We had a bully day, even if we didn't go gathering Autumn leaves with the nicest girl in the country."

"She got those," said Philip, pointing to the bunch on the table, "and she sent them to you boys to decorate the Camp."

"And she knows ever so many riddles," said Lucci, with the happiest smile. "We had lots of fun exchanging riddles—here's one for you—"

"What will go up a chimney down, but not down a chimney up?"

Jimmie and Rand put on their thinking-caps and made many wild guesses, while Philip and Lucci made fun of the answers.

After a while they sat down to supper and when Jimmie had repeated the riddle a dozen times over to himself, Philip arose softly, and procured an old umbrella. He hit Jimmie playfully on the head when all at once our hero cried out—

“Good enough, an umbrella will go up a chimney down, but not down a chimney up. That’s a good one!”

That Saturday evening was a quiet one in Camp. When the supper dishes were cleared away the boys read until bed time.

CHAPTER XXI

WINTER SPORT

THE following weeks were rather quiet ones for our boys. They met every Friday after school at Pigeon Camp, but nothing happened out of the ordinary course of events.

One Friday afternoon Rand called Jimmie aside and told him that his father had succeeded in getting Jackson Wilber employment.

“Good,” cried Jimmie, “I’m glad to hear that he has honest work to do at last.”

“Yes, it’s a good thing,” said Rand; “my father felt very sorry for him and got him a position to assist the janitor of the big building where my father has an office.”

"We must never tell what we know," said Jimmie, in a low voice.

"Never," echoed the other boy.

The real cold weather had now made itself felt in Sunnyview and one Saturday morning our four boys spent the forenoon getting the house-boat into winter quarters, which was simply hauling it into a small inlet of the lake.

"We shall use it this winter," said Jimmie.

"What are you going to do with a house-boat in winter?" asked Lucci.

"We'll have it as our headquarters for a skating club, how would that do?"

"I never thought of that—Good!" returned the little artist.

"With a fire in that little stove the *Marjorie* will be a great place to go and get warm after a good game of hockey," observed Philip.

“But hockey’s a long way off yet,” said Rand.

“I don’t agree with you,” said Jimmie, “it’s going to freeze this very night.”

The boy’s predictions came true; there was a drop in the mercury that made a good thick coating of ice on the lake, but as it snowed all the next day the boys did not have much fun out of it.

Winter had now set in and all sorts of plans were made. Jimmie decided to build a fine toboggan chute near the lake and the campers looked forward to jolly times.

One Friday in December it was so biting cold that the boys brought their skates along to have in readiness, knowing that the lake would surely freeze that night and if it did, hurrah! for skating on the morrow.

After supper they piled on the wood in Ben’s little stove and made a splendid fire,

then they sat around it and ate boiled chestnuts and told stories until bed time.

It was a bitter cold night but our little campers had plenty of blankets to keep them warm and they did not mind the weather at all.

Early the next morning, when they all ran out of doors to see the lake a sheet of glass, they gave three cheers for the game of hockey they meant to play a little later in the day.

“Isn’t it fine! Wouldn’t you rather play hockey than do anything else in the world to-day?” cried Philip with enthusiasm, giving Lucci a slap on the back.

“I don’t know anything about hockey, I’m sorry to say,” returned Lucci, “and I never skated in my life.”

“Never skated!” cried the others in a chorus.

“No, never even had on a pair of skates,” declared the boy.

“Well, it’s time you had,” said Rand, “and I have an old pair, not so very old either—just the ones to learn to skate on. They’re in the barn of the Sunnyview house, I think,” said Rand. “I’ll go over there and see if I can find them.”

“Thank you,” replied Lucci, “I’ll go with you and help find them.”

The boy’s eyes sparkled when some time later Rand found the old skates, and then they all went down to the lake where Lucci received his first lesson in skating.

After a while the boys left him to strike out for himself while they joined the hockey team and were soon in the midst of the exciting game.

They played all the morning and only stopped when Lucci, who had sometime before slipped off his skates and started Campward, returned to the edge of the lake and called them all to dinner.

But the boys felt that they did not have half enough skating and all declared they would return to the ice after dinner and skate all afternoon.

“We must make the most of it,” said Rand, “because I’m afraid it won’t last.”

“It’s thin over near the burned ice-houses,” said Jimmie; “the wind sweeps over that corner, so that it never freezes as hard as the rest of the lake.”

CHAPTER XXII

A SPLENDID HERO

THAT Saturday afternoon it seemed as if everybody in Sunnyview and the near-by towns had gathered on the ice to enjoy the first skating of the season.

“It’s glorious, isn’t it, Lucci,” cried Jimmie, as he with Philip and Rand flew like the wind past the little artist, who was making fair progress in his second attempt at skating.

Every now and then one of our boys would hold a stick while Lucci grasped it and was pulled around, and sometimes Jimmie and Philip would take Lucci’s hands and try to show him how it felt to skate fast.

Lucci was enjoying himself thoroughly when the boys skated off to the other side of

the lake and left him to strike out for himself.

The boy's face beamed with pride and pleasure as he went along for a short stretch with something like the ease and grace of a practised skater; in turning suddenly, however, his feet went from under him and he fell backwards.

A loud "ha-ha" greeted Lucci as he scrambled to his feet and turning he beheld Shad Wilber surrounded by a dozen small boys, laughing uproariously at his mishap.

Lucci joined in the mirth with good-nature saying:

"I saw stars that time."

Shad swept his eye over the ice to be sure Jimmie Suter was not in sight, and then turning to the small boys surrounding him, whispered:

"Make fun of the Dago—Go ahead!"

Lucci, still smiling over the fall, was strik-

ing out bravely, as if wholly unconscious of Shad's presence.

"Do it now," urged Shad threateningly under his breath to the group.

Shad Wilber, as we know, was a bully. He had no following among the boys of his own age and size. They knew his real value but the little fellows were afraid of him.

There was no knowing when he would give them a kick or a cuff, and so there was a half-hearted attempt on their part to obey him. One bolder than the rest called out:

"Ah! get off the ice! Look at the Dago trying to skate."

"Good! you're not afraid of him—give it to him," urged Shad.

Then the others, hoping to curry favor and merit the bully's approval, called out:

"Get off the ice! Go where you belong, Dago. Look at him! Look at the fancy skater!"

They laughed again, and one of them picked up a stone and struck Lucci on the arm.

“Here, none of that!” cried Lucci warmly, “don’t you throw any stones!”

Shad’s face beamed with pleasure and he stood apart, as if he had had no hand in the mean act.

The small tormentors stepped back, there was something in Lucci’s face that silenced them.

Just at this point, their attention was drawn to a big automobile that stopped in the road and out of which jumped a young girl in a bright red skating cap, who made her way toward them.

The automobile went on, the girl waving her skates to the man in it until the big car was out of sight.

Lucci was gazing as if spell-bound until it was borne in upon him that he knew that au-

tomobile and the man in it, and the girl who was now on the very edge of the ice trying to put on her skates.

He made an awkward attempt to reach her and after a struggle succeeded.

“How do you do, Lucci,” said Marjorie; “doesn’t the ice look good? Oh, I just teased father to let me come over here and skate. He’s gone on to Northwood and is coming back in a couple of hours. I mean to skate miles and miles in that time.”

Lucci returned the girl’s greeting and was on his knees in an instant putting on her skates.

“I don’t know very much about skating,” said Lucci, when the girl stood up a moment later. “This is only the second time I have had them on.”

“You are doing very well, indeed. You must expect a few tumbles, you know.”

“I do,” said Lucci, and just at that instant

he lost his balance and almost fell at Marjorie's feet. "They always come when least expected," he added with a merry laugh, struggling to get on his feet again.

Marjorie laughed softly. "I think I had more fun when learning to skate than I've ever had since and all because of those jolly tumbles."

While our little camper was talking to the girl, Shad stood there drinking in every word and when Lucci fell at her feet he gave a scornful laugh that was echoed by his small followers.

One of them tried to mock Lucci and fell on the ice, while his companions laughed louder than ever.

"See me skate like the Dago," said another, starting off with awkward movements of hands and legs.

The hot blood rushed to Lucci's face while Shad grinned with pleasure. Ever since that

day when he had received a well-deserved thrashing at Lucci's hands, Shad hated him, and to see him humiliated before this graceful girl skater was sweet indeed.

But although Lucci blushed with shame and confusion he did not appear to hear the taunts at all and tried to smile bravely at the girl's conversation.

After a while the small boys seemed to realize that their efforts to have fun at his expense were futile and they started off.

"Everybody seems to be over on the other side," said Marjorie, as she skated around.

"Yes, it is smoother over there," replied Lucci. "I stayed here because I would be less in the way of the fancy skaters."

"Are there many fancy skaters on the lake?"

"I've seen a few," said Lucci. "Jimmie Suter is a very fancy skater and Philip and Rand are both fine skaters."

"I see them now!" exclaimed Marjorie, "and I'm going over."

"Wait a moment," called Lucci, as she started off, "I just wanted to say that the ice is thin near the burned ice-houses. You see there isn't any one skating there."

"But it's safe getting over from here isn't it?" asked the girl.

"Oh yes! it's all safe except in just that part."

"Thank you, I'll be careful," she said, and the next moment was headed for the crowd.

Lucci stood and watched her as she glided over the ice and very soon saw Rand and Philip and Jimmie come to meet her. They raised their caps almost simultaneously and stood together talking. Then Lucci saw Rand and Marjorie skate away together.

Lucci smiled wistfully. He wished that he could skate like the other boys. His cheeks still burned at the words of Shad Wilber's

companions. They were only little boys, it was true, and the episode was really beneath the notice of a big, manly boy and yet the words stung.

Lucci brooded over them as he struggled back and forth on his skates. He was a "Dago," something to be laughed at and held in contempt. His lips tightened as he glanced across the ice to where Marjorie's red cap was plainly visible as she and Rand glided in and out among the skaters.

Just at this point Philip and Jimmie started to come toward him and his face softened as the thought flashed into his mind that the boys of Pigeon Camp had never looked down upon him because he was a "Dago."

Was he not one of them? Had they not long ago extended the hand of good fellowship and treated him always as a friend and an equal?

The bitter thoughts gave way to happier

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ones. He was proud of the fact that he was one of the Pigeon Camp boys and he hoped the time would come that he might do something to prove himself worthy of their friendship and confidence.

“You’re doing first rate, Lucci,” cried Jimmie and Philip in a breath as they approached.

“Before you know it, you will be cutting the grapevine backward,” laughed Philip. “The skating is fine and I just hate to have to leave it, but I promised my mother I’d be home early.”

“It isn’t very early,” said Jimmie. “I’ve got to go, too,” and so saying the two boys started to take off their skates.

“As soon as my chores are done at home,” added Jimmie, “I’ll be back to Camp with supplies. Mother steamed an extra loaf of brown bread for us to-day.”

“That makes me hungry,” said Philip. “I

only wish I were going to be with you to-night. I suppose Rand will skate while he has a breath left to-day," he added with a laugh.

They all looked across to where Rand and Marjorie, still skating together, were having a royal good time.

Then Jimmie and Philip left the ice, while Lucci, encouraged by their words, kept bravely on up and down with untiring zeal, every now and then looking over to where the red cap made a bright dash of color.

"Well," said the little artist to himself some time later, "I think I'd better start for Camp and get my chores all done before Jimmie gets there," and suiting the action to the words he sat on the ice and took off his skates.

He was about to go when the thought came to him that perhaps he ought to speak to Rand and say good-bye to Marjorie, so he

walked across the ice, sliding as he went.

He smiled to himself as he realized that he could get along on the ice much faster without skates.

Between swift runs and slides he reached the merry throng of skaters until in the very midst of them and Marjorie and Rand skated to him.

The girl would have made an ideal picture of a nymph of winter as she stood before the little artist. With cheeks glowing and eyes a-sparkle from the splendid exercise, she was the embodiment of youth and health and gay spirits.

Rand looked very happy and teased Lucci not a little about his first attempt at skating.

"I'll tell you what to do, Lucci," laughed the girl. "When you have mastered the art, challenge him to a race."

"To see who'll cover the most ice?" questioned Lucci. "Oh! I can beat him without

even trying. I've been practising all this afternoon."

"And such a glorious afternoon!" exclaimed Marjorie. "I hope it will freeze tonight and this skating last for a long time."

"I hope so, too," said Lucci, "if it doesn't, I'm afraid I'll have to begin all over again, and now I must be off."

"What! going so soon?" questioned Rand.

"Yes, I must. I want to get all the chores done before dark and surprise Jimmie when he comes over."

So saying, Lucci raised his cap to Marjorie and started for the nearest bank.

He ran lightly over the ice but had hardly mounted the small embankment that surrounded the lake at this point, when he heard a shriek that made him turn quickly and look back at the throng of skaters.

For a second he saw only a crowd of people, all ages and sizes, standing as if spell-

bound, gazing at something. He heard them shout. He saw them running hither and thither and then he caught a glimpse of something red.

Lucci ran back, a strange feeling of impending danger urging him on, but he had gone only a little way when he saw a sight that made his blood run cold.

The two happy friends that only a moment before had been talking to him had skated too near the fatal spot, and not twenty feet away were Rand and Marjorie in the icy waters of the lake.

For one brief second of time Lucci looked on mute and terror-stricken, then like a flash he was up the bank again and across the road to an old fence, from which he wrenched a board.

No one had seen him until he reappeared in their midst.

“Back!” cried Lucci to the crowd. “Out

of my way!" He quickly ran over the thin ice until the cracking sound told him to drop flat, then pushing the board before him, while the onlookers held their breath and sincerely prayed to God, he reached the boy and girl in the water.

The girl was on the board, how—Lucci never knew, but his lips moved as he backed slowly over the treacherous ice with his precious burden, until at last she was pulled from the board to safety.

In the meantime a great crowd had collected on the bank and a mighty shout went up, but stilled at the sight of Lucci, as he started back for Rand.

A man threw him a clothes-line as he made the second perilous attempt. Some urged him on, while others shouted to him to come back, as it was sure death.

But the little hero heard nothing.

"Keep up, Rand! A little longer! One

more minute!" he cried, in voice that to his own ears sounded far off, and all the while his eager hands were fingering the clothes line.

"I—can't—keep—up,—good-bye," sobbed Rand.

He threw up one hand. There was a death-like silence over the crowd and strong men turned away their faces and wept. Then a noose caught the drowning boy and he, too, was drawn out and back swiftly,—carefully, over the thin ice, until suddenly a great cheer went up and everybody was calling and shouting as if mad.

Lucci never knew how the rest happened. He saw a great sea of faces and heard the murmur of many voices. He had a vague sense of being relieved of his burden and then everything grew dark.

When Lucci opened his eyes there were still the strange faces all about him. Some

one was holding him in his arms and a friendly voice whispered something in his ear.

Lucci learned afterwards that it was Mr. Reeves. Then Lucci stood up and in an instant the meaning of it all flashed over him.

“Where’s Rand? Is Rand drowned?” he asked, trembling all over.

“No, no, Lucci, he’s safe,—safe and well, thank God!” cried Mr. Reeves; “boy and girl both saved.”

Then Lucci sat down on the bank and cried like a child.

For a while they let him cry his heart out. It was a vent for all the pent-up misery of those terrible moments, but when Lucci’s eyes cleared and he looked around shamefaced at his display of emotion, he felt himself raised high in the air, and amid shouts and cheers the hero of Pigeon Camp was carried homeward on the shoulders of the townspeople.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONCLUSION

THE days that followed were never-to-be-forgotten ones in our little hero's life.

He had been very ill after the exciting events of that Saturday. A heavy cold had settled on the boy's lungs and for a few days the doctor looked grave, fearing pneumonia.

But the crisis had passed and the second week found him well on the road to recovery.

One morning as he sat propped up with pillows, and the sun streamed through the windows in Jimmie's Suter's little room, he thought of all that had befallen him.

They had taken him to Jimmie's house after the accident and he had been there ever

since, and Jimmie's mother had ministered to him as if he were her own boy.

How good everybody had been!

The beautiful flowers on the table were from Rand and Marjorie. They, too, had been ill after the sad affair on the ice and both were still confined to their homes, but Marjorie's father and mother had been to see him and he had received a letter from the bright little girl herself that made him feel wonderfully happy, and Rand's father had come, and there were tears in the man's eyes as he held Lucci's hand in both his own and told the little hero that he owed his boy's life to Lucci's heroism.

And there was Jimmie!

Jimmie, who would rush in from school and up the stairs to the sick boy's room like a streak.

His praise was dearer to our little hero than that of anybody else.

“And here he is now,” thought Lucci as he heard a step on the stairs, but it proved to be Mr. Reeves, who had a way of dropping in, and the hours that were wont to drag went all too swiftly whenever he came.

To-day, however, he was on his way to the city and could not stay, but he had a little package that he put in Lucci’s hands.

“It’s a promise I made once to you and this is a good time to keep it. There may be something in it that will help pass a dull hour in bed.”

Then he slipped away before Lucci could thank him and the boy opened the package to find a new book!

He read the title over and over and a smile lit up his fine face:

BILLY BARKER

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JOHN JAY REEVES

“Look here!” cried Jimmie, some time later, bursting into the room, “this is the third time I’ve been in here and you never saw me.”

He leaned forward and looked at the new book.

“Is it good?”

But Lucci was shaking with laughter and did not answer.

“I say, Lucci! Is it as funny as all that?”

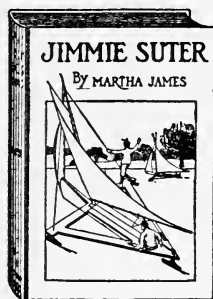
“It’s—fine,—now go away and let me finish.”

THE END

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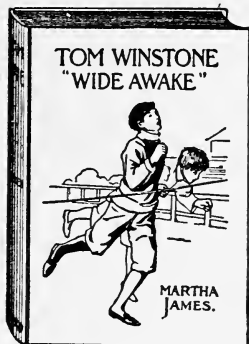
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